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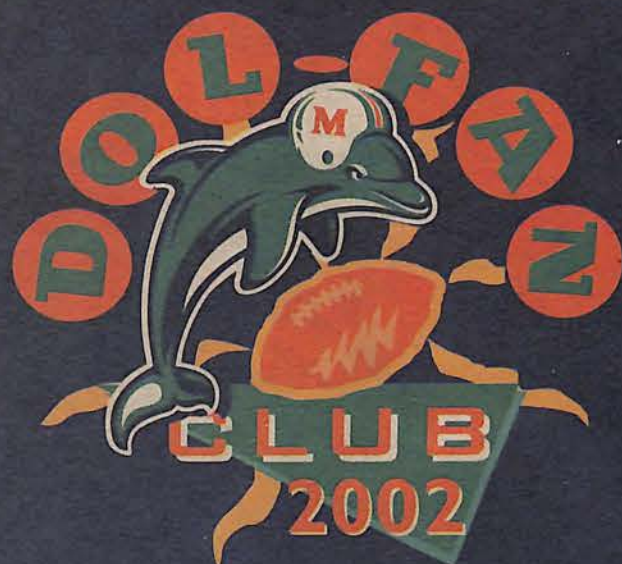


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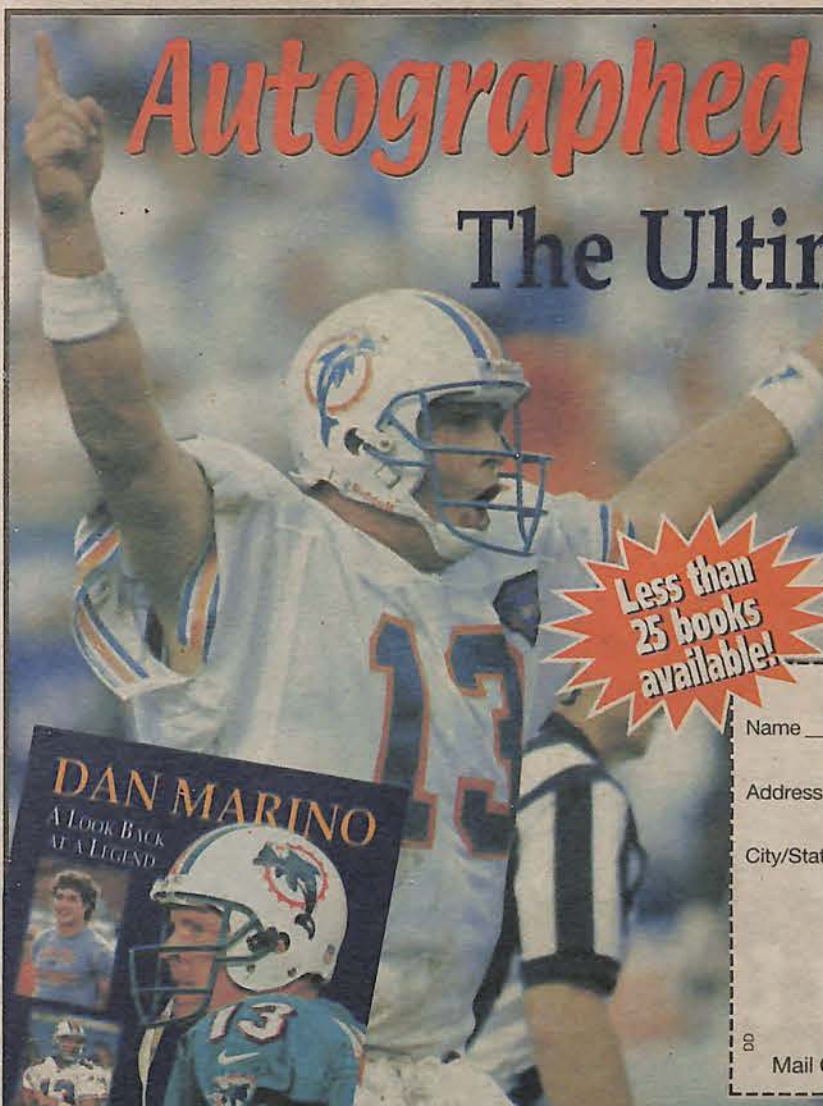
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Big trade sends message

If you're not genuinely excited over the trade that brought Ricky Williams to the Miami Dolphins, then it may be time to check for a pulse because it doesn't get much better than this.

ANDY
Cohen

EDITOR



There hasn't been a trade like this one since the Dolphins got Don Shula for a No. 1 pick back in 1970, and we know how that one turned out. Talk about robbery, the Saints had their pockets picked, their car towed away and their house ransacked all in one fell swoop.

The Dolphins give up the 25th pick of this draft — for perspective purposes, this is the same spot they got a total bust named Billy Milner in the 1995 draft — and a third-round pick in 2003 that, based on final rushing numbers next season, hopefully will become a second or a first. In return, the Dolphins get the best pure running back this franchise has seen since Larry Csonka.

If that wasn't enticing enough, the Saints swapped fourth-round picks, improving where the Dolphins select by 11 spots. At this rate, the Dolphins should have tried to get moving expenses as well.

Seriously, even the most skeptical of fans — and we know you are out there — can't second-guess what the Dolphins have pulled off.

Third-and-1 has just become third-and-run.

The running game that couldn't is now the running game that can.

The biggest void that has surrounded this franchise for most of the past 30 years has now evaporated.

At long last, the Dolphins have a marquee running back in the prime of his career. Not somebody we think can be good, but somebody who has already shown that if he isn't among the top five runners in the league he is certainly within close proximity.

Other than maybe Edgerrin James, Curtis Martin or Corey Dillon, it is hard to think of a back who better fits the big, bruising mold of the back Dave Wannstedt needs for what he is trying to accomplish.

Remember how easily Lamar Smith went down last season? Maybe an outstretched hand would do it. Williams eats arm tackles for breakfast. He doesn't merely run hard, he runs with a chip on his broad shoulders. It is no coincidence that his yards per carry average is highest in the fourth quarter. By that time, his constant pounding has usually taken its toll on a defense.

It is too premature to suggest that the Dolphins traded for a trip to the



Coach Dave Wannstedt got the big, bruising back he had been looking for when the Dolphins were able to pull off the trade for Ricky Williams.

Digest Photo/KEN KEIDEL

Super Bowl. But believe this: They are a lot closer right now than they've been in a long, long time.

For a franchise that has unceremoniously bowed out of the playoffs in a disheartening manner each of the last five seasons, the trade for Ricky Williams sends a clear message. Being merely good isn't enough. The Dolphins are willing to do whatever it takes to reach the next level. They proved it by making a serious run at Chicago center Olin Kreutz, a run that fell just short, and they proved it by relentlessly pursuing Williams.

No doubt, the Dolphins got lucky. But when you consider how much lousy luck they've had at running back over the years, maybe they were due.

The Saints felt as if they needed to unload Williams after drafting Deuce McAllister a year ago. They had given up a ridiculous number of draft picks to acquire Williams only three years ago, but that was Mike Ditka's stunt and you got the feeling that Coach Jim Haslett and General Manager Randy Mueller wanted to distance themselves from that forgettable transaction as quickly as possible.

The Dolphins saw the opening and, just as Williams does, they burst through it. They clearly benefited from the fact that other teams had priorities other than running back and that the Saints didn't want this to drag on any

longer. It was the right team at the right time, and it all fell neatly into place.

OK, Williams isn't exactly a Saint (no pun intended). There have been some youthful indiscretions, some of them caused by a condition diagnosed as an anxiety disorder, a condition that literally left Williams hiding behind his facemask for much of his time with the Saints. He would say the wrong things and sometimes do the wrong things. A recent speeding ticket for going 126 miles per hour suggests a lack of common sense.

But he isn't a bad kid, just maybe a little misguided. You got the feeling listening to him talk upon his arrival in South Florida that he is determined to put those past mistakes behind him and that he relishes the opportunity of giving the Dolphins the best of Ricky Williams.

And the best of Ricky Williams is something to behold.

The rippling effect of this trade will be felt throughout the entire organization. It will make Jay Fiedler a better quarterback, Chris Chambers a better receiver, the defense a more efficient group and Wannstedt a better coach.

A couple of years ago, an opposing defensive coordinator was heard mocking the Dolphins for even attempting a play-action pass. "When you can't run the ball," he said, "nobody is going to fall for that."

Now, that has all changed. With one terrific trade, everything has changed.

Yes, there are obstacles that still remain. The offensive line desperately needs an upgrade, maybe two upgrades, there is no tight end to roam down the middle of the field in Norv Turner's new offense, and the line-backing corps is one injury away from a crisis situation. These are things that must be addressed in the weeks to come, things that could prove so crucial when the hitting starts for real.

But the biggest hole has been filled. The Dolphins have a back for the future as well as the present. They have 30 carries a game and a bunch of short-yardage plays that will now result in first downs. They have consistency and credibility. They have a difference-maker.

Ricky Williams in a Dolphins uniform. If that can't get your juices flowing, what can?

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of *Dolphin Digest* you will receive will be printed in early May and will include a complete recap of the NFL draft, as well as the other off-season developments.



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On the Cover ...

Running back Ricky Williams addresses the South Florida media after being acquired in a trade with New Orleans, a move that helped the Dolphins fill their biggest need.

Cover Photo/KEN KEIDEL



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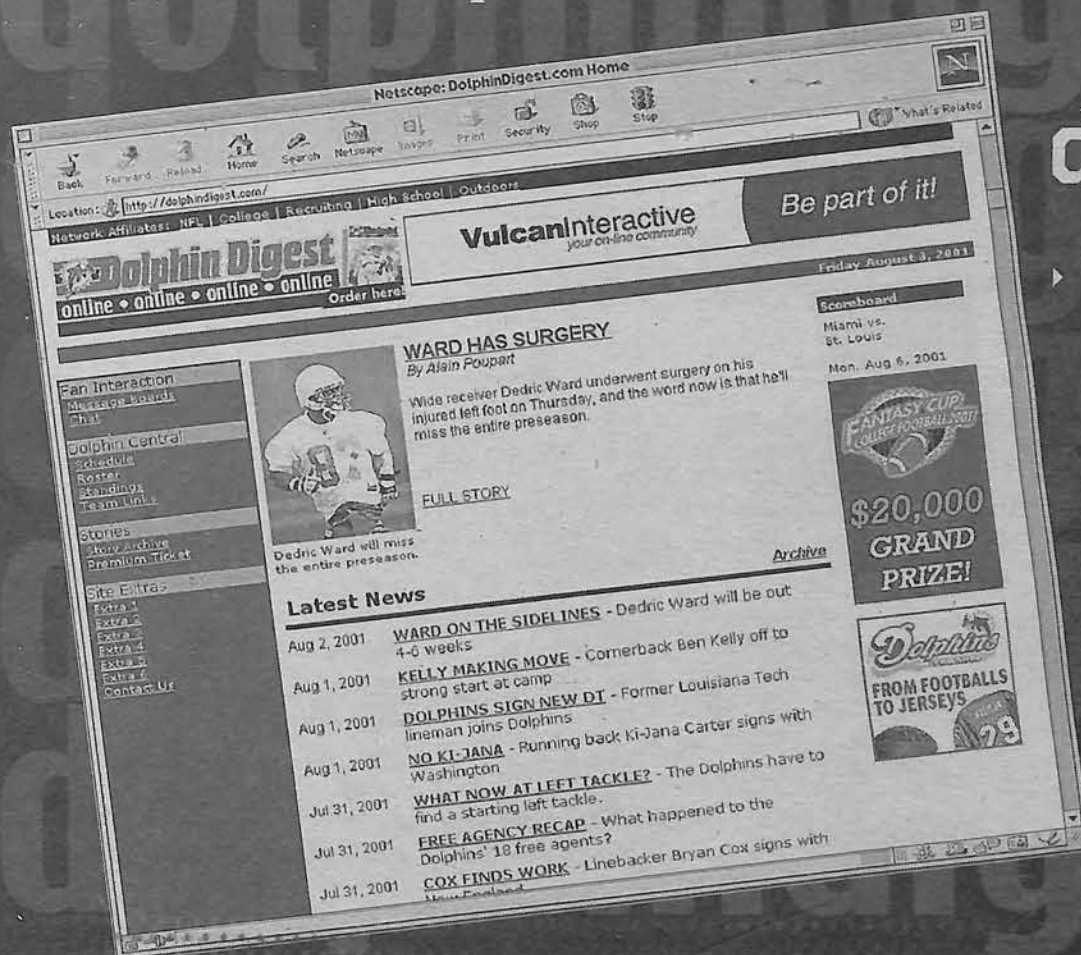
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The perfect online home for Dol-Fans

Just being good isn't enough

What an offseason it has been, and we're not even at the draft yet.

We trade for Ricky Williams. We sign Larry Chester and Leon Searcy. We re-sign Brock Marion. We're busy talking to other free agents. As all of these things unfold, I really sense a

DAVE Wannstedt

HEAD COACH



feeling of urgency amongst our team. A good feeling of urgency.

Our players know we are not happy to win just 11 games. Our players know we want more than that. We're trying to win the Super Bowl. It should be clear by now that we're serious about this and we're covering all of our bases and doing everything we can to get over the top.

People ask me if the trade for Ricky Williams makes us a Super Bowl contender. We were a Super Bowl contender last year. We won as many regular season games as the Super Bowl champion. That's the team we're chasing now. But there's no question we're closer right now than we were when last season ended. You don't pick up a talented player like Ricky Williams and not improve.

I spent several days with Ricky after the trade and we had several long conversations. The first thing that jumped out at me, and really jumped out, is that this is one intelligent guy. Any of the things that happened to him in the past were silly things, and he is well aware of that. He knows exactly what he's doing and he knows that what he has here with the Dolphins is a great opportunity. He's got something to prove now. That all adds up to a positive situation.

I watched every film I could get my hands on of Ricky running the ball and I believe what we've got here is a player who is on the verge of really taking his career to the next level. He



Among the many positive aspects in the acquisition of Ricky Williams is the fact he's only 24 years old.

Digest File Photo

is such a complete back. He's not just a pounder in the middle that you're afraid to throw the ball to. It's incredible how this guy breaks tackles. He has a God-given ability to dip his shoulder, spin and make some yards where there aren't yards to make, a great feel for finding the soft spot in

the defense.

We can use him a lot like we used Emmitt Smith in Dallas. Sure, we're going to still use Travis Minor in certain situations. But there won't be a plan anymore where we say that Ricky is out of the game because it's third down now. He's in the game, a lot like

Indianapolis uses Edgerrin James. He's in there until he needs a rest.

I won't fall into the trap of centering everything around Ricky Williams. That's where you get in trouble. You can't win that way. To win a Super Bowl, you have to have a complete team — offense, defense and special teams. Ricky is going to be a major part of it, let's not kid ourselves. But no more than Jay Fiedler or Jason Taylor or Olindo Mare.

The thing about the Williams trade is that it stayed with our philosophy of trying to bring in as many young players as possible. That's why we made a serious run at trying to sign Olin Kreutz away from the Bears. He's a 24-year-old guy with tremendous ability. We looked at the draft and at free agency and we realized that there was nobody better than Kreutz as an offensive lineman and Williams as a running back. That's why we worked so hard in those directions.

Am I surprised we didn't get Kreutz? Not really. The Bears knew what they had. But we still had to give it a good run. We owe that to our players and our fans.

I'm optimistic that on the offensive line Brent Smith, Marcus Spriggs and Mark Dixon will all be back healthy. We're not going to offer huge dollars to other offensive linemen because Kreutz was the only player we put in that category. The offensive line will be a priority in the draft. We may try to sign another one through free agency like we signed Leon Searcy. But our thought process is to bring in at least two more offensive linemen to compete with the group we have coming back.

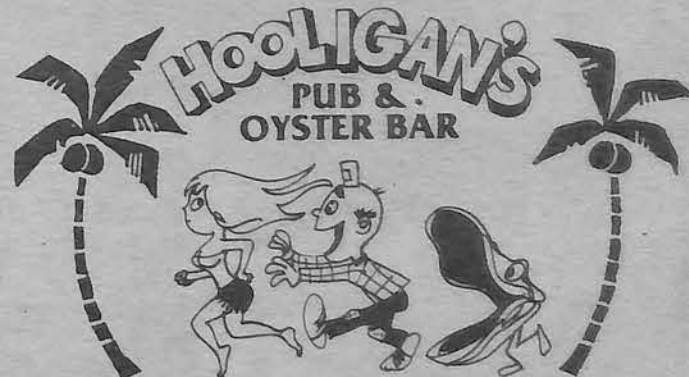
I think we'll get at least two compensatory picks added to the four draft picks we already have. So we'll end up with six picks. I think we'll need five first-year players to make the team. We definitely need another good linebacker, probably on the outside, and maybe a tight end. That would fill things in nicely.

See WANNSTEDT, page 6

MARCH MADNESS!

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WANNSTEDT, from page 5

I've been talking so much about the players we've added, I haven't mentioned that maybe the most important free agent signing we've had is Norv Turner. We have one of the best, if not the best, offensive coordinators in the league. We're going to change our offense. You'll notice the changes. You'll see more distribution of the football. The plays will be different. You'll see more movement in our formations. The tight end, full-back and tailback will be more involved in the passing game.

Norv and I worked together at Dallas and at Southern Cal. I've seen him under the gun. I've sat next to him in critical situations. He knows how to move the chains. There is nobody better.

With all the things we've done to help our football team, I'm ready for training camp to begin right away. Everybody looks good in shorts, so this might turn out to be one of the most frustrating minicamps I've been through. I don't want to see the players in shorts. I want to see them in pads.

I know the fans are excited now and the media will be writing all sorts of stories about high expectations. Ricky will be running and Jay will be throwing and Chris Chambers will be catching. But this is a contact game



JAY FIEDLER

and nothing really matters until you put the pads on.

As pleased as I am with the Ricky Williams trade, I'll reserve my enthusiasm until the time I see him make that first run or break a tackle in a game that counts. That's when it will really hit me. That's when I want to see it all come together.

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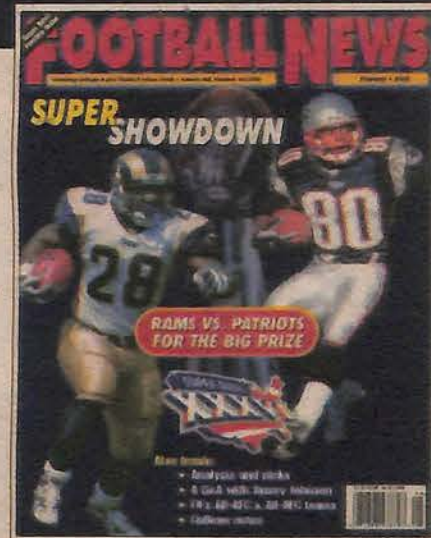
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DOLPHIN DATA

Will Gardener be defensive end?

The re-signing of **Tim Bowens** and the addition of unrestricted free agent **Larry Chester** have given the Dolphins plenty of depth at the defensive tackle position. And it might also mean some time at defensive end for **Daryl Gardener**.

The Dolphins have discussed that possibility since the signings of Bowens and Chester and the loss of defensive end **Kenny Mixon** as a free agent.

Gardener saw some action at that spot as a rookie in 1996 and he certainly would provide a run-stopping force at end. Playing at end also could reduce the amount of pounding on Gardener, whose back problems forced him to miss the last eight games last season.

"My preference is to remain at defensive tackle because I know the guys I play against in the division," Gardener said. "However, if it is in the best interest of the team for me to move to defensive end, I'm not opposed to it. But I want to play."

NATIONAL EXPOSURE: For the second consecutive year, the Dolphins will face the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on national television during the preseason. This year's matchup is scheduled for Thursday, Aug. 8 with an 8 p.m. kickoff time.

TOUGH AS NAILS: Among the many players signed by the Dolphins in the offseason was former Bills guard **Jamie Nails**, who spent two weeks with Miami last August. Nails



GARDENER



DIXON



JONES



JOHNSON

brings starting experience (22 starts in four years with Buffalo), but his weight was an issue last summer.

TV STAR: **Dan Marino** has added CBS' "The NFL Today" to his gig on HBO's "Inside the NFL." Marino will join newcomer **Boomer Esiason** and holdovers **Deion Sanders** and **Jim Nantz** on the revamped show, with **Mike Ditka** staying in a reduced role.

DIXON'S DECISION: Guard **Mark Dixon** hasn't publicly stated he's definitely coming back next season, but all signs indicate that he will. Dixon, who talked about retiring

after suffering a season-ending ankle injury last year, has been working out at the team's facility on a daily basis. Dixon underwent surgery on March 13 to remove two screws from his left ankle.

VETERANS WAIVED: After leaving them exposed in the expansion draft, the Dolphins later waived veterans **Hunter Goodwin**, **Scott Galyon** and **Heath Irwin**. Goodwin has received a lot of interest around the NFL — Arizona, Houston, Oakland, Detroit and Minnesota, among others — but he remained unsigned as of March 18.

TICKET TALE: The Dolphins announced a ticket price increase for 2002, with the average price going from \$42.62 to \$45.83. That figure is \$3 less than the average of a ticket price around the NFL last year. Dolphins single-game tickets range in price from \$29 to \$67. "If you look at the ticket prices without context, you'd scratch your head," said Dolphins chief operating officer **Bryan Wiedmeier**, "but with player costs rising 8 to 10 percent a year, you've got to fund that."

MAYBE NEXT YEAR: Guard **Bob Kuechenberg** came up short in his bid to make the Hall of Fame, failing to get the necessary 27 of 35 votes after becoming a Hall finalist for the first time. "We lost the first Super Bowl, too," Kuechenberg said. "But it's a step in the right direction. I'm honored to have been chosen as a finalist. It's the first time I was on the ballot and I'm hopeful of taking the final step next year."

ONE MORE YEAR: On the day **Jay Fiedler** was re-signed, **Wannstedt** also signed a one-year contract extension through the 2004 season. "The significance of it is that Mr. (Wayne) Huizenga obviously has confidence that things are headed in the right direction," said Wannstedt.

FINAL YEAR: Team president **Eddie Jones** has announced he will retire after the 2002 season. "I'll be 65, and it's the perfect time to spend time with the family and travel," Jones said. "I wanted to do it when I was in good health." Jones has been with the Dolphins since 1988 and was named team president in 1996.

Dolphins grant J.J. Johnson's wish

Running back J.J. Johnson's disappointing career with the Dolphins came to an end in mid-March when he was dealt to Cleveland, several days after his agent asked the team to trade or release him.

In return, the Dolphins got a conditional seventh-round pick in the 2004 draft; the Dolphins will get the pick if Johnson is on the Browns' 2002 regular season roster.

The Dolphins had made Johnson available for the expansion draft, but the Houston Texans bypassed the chance to grab him.

Johnson, a second-round pick in 1999, became a non-factor in the Miami offense early last season after he was replaced as the third-down back by rookie Travis Minor. He carried the ball only five times all year and had four catches.

Dates to remember

April 15 — Signing period ends for restricted free agents

April 19 — Deadline for old club to exercise right of first refusal to restricted free agents

April 20-21 — NFL Draft, New York City

April 26-28 — Minicamp

April 30-May 2 — Quarterback School

May 21-23 — Quarterback School

June 4-6 — Quarterback School

June 18-20 — Quarterback School

July 22 — Signing period ends at 4 p.m. ET for unrestricted free agents

Aug. 3 — American Bowl, Osaka, Japan: Washington vs. San Francisco

Aug. 5 — Pro Football Hall of Fame Game: Houston vs. New York Giants

Aug. 8 — Preseason game: Miami at Tampa Bay

Aug. 15-19 — Preseason game: New Orleans at Miami

Aug. 22-26 — Preseason game: Miami at Houston

Aug. 29-Sept. 1 — Preseason game: Chicago at Miami

Sept. 8 — Regular season opens

Dec. 30 — Regular season ends

Jan. 4-5, 2003 — Wild-card playoffs

Jan. 11-12, 2003 — Divisional playoffs

Jan. 19, 2003 — Conference championships

Jan. 26, 2003 — Super Bowl XXXVII, at San Diego, Calif.



Edwards gets a shot

Robert Edwards hasn't given up on the idea of playing again in the NFL after missing the last three years, and the Dolphins are anxious to see what he can do during training camp.

The former Patriots running back, who tore up his knee on the beaches of Hawaii in February of 1999, was signed to a one-year contract.

"I don't have any doubts," said Edwards, who was in New England's camp last summer. "If I had any doubts, I wouldn't be here trying to make a comeback. I don't favor (the leg). I don't think about it when I'm out there. Hopefully, it'll hold up for me, and I'll be ready."

If Edwards can show anywhere near the form he displayed while rushing for 1,115 yards as a rookie with New England in 1998, he could wind up as the backup to Ricky Williams.

That would be a remarkable accomplishment for Edwards, given the severity of his injury. While playing in a league-sponsored flag-football game, Edwards dislocated his left knee and suffered ligament, nerve and artery damage.

"It was a tragic injury he had and it speaks highly of the kid to work the last two years to come back from such an injury," said Dolphins senior vice president Rick Spielman. "And the type of person Robert is fits in with what we like on this team."

FREE AGENCY 2002

Searcy a steal?

It didn't cost the Dolphins a lot of money to take the chance that Leon Searcy can regain his form after missing two years because of injuries.

And if it turns out he can, the Dolphins will have had themselves some kind of bargain after picking up Searcy for a mere \$750,000, with only \$450,000 counting against the salary cap.

That's a cheap price for a guy who was selected to the Pro Bowl in 1999 and was a first or second alternate the previous three seasons.

"We were pretty fortunate that someone of that caliber of a player ended up wanting to come down and play for the Miami Dolphins and get a chance to win some ballgames and hopefully get over the hump," said Dolphins senior vice president Rick Spielman.

The 32-year-old Searcy was released by Baltimore this offseason after missing all of last year because of a torn triceps tendon in his left arm. He also didn't play in 2000, his last year with Jacksonville, because of a quadriceps injury.

Searcy has played right tackle since being drafted 11th overall by the Steelers in 1992, but the Dolphins plan on using him at right guard, where he will challenge incumbent Todd Perry for the starting job. Searcy also could move back to right tackle should anything happen to Todd Wade.

"This will be a new experience for him playing guard because he's always been a tackle," Spielman said, "but it'll be pretty interesting seeing him and Timbo (Tim Bowens) butting heads during training camp."

Searcy played for Dolphins offensive line coach Tony Wise at the University of Miami as a freshman in 1988 and later won two national championships with the Hurricanes (1989, 1991).

But he has never won a Super Bowl title, and that was part of what made him pick the Dolphins over the handful of other teams, including Atlanta and Washington, that were interested in his services.

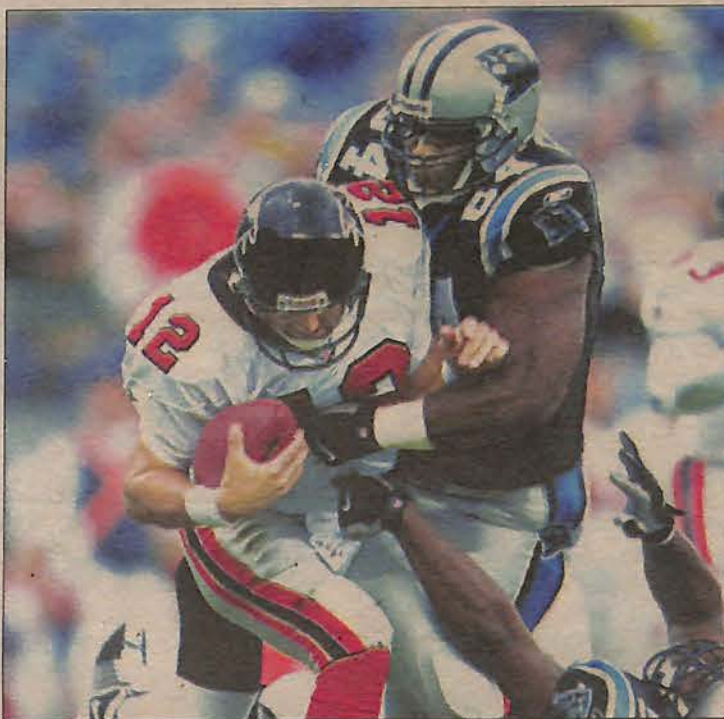
"I've been blessed financially," said Searcy, who was a member of the Steelers when they lost to Dallas in Super Bowl XXX. "I was looking for the opportunity to put the cherry on top of my career."

Another motivation for Searcy is showing that he once again can be a dominant offensive lineman.

"When I left the game, I was at the pinnacle of my game and then I fell off with the injuries," said Searcy. "Fans and coaches sometimes have short-term memories, but I'm just looking forward to getting back out there and playing the kind of football I know I'm capable of."



SEARCY



Larry Chester is coming off a solid season with the Carolina Panthers, and the Dolphins think he's a perfect fit for their defense.

Chester brings some muscle

Even after re-signing Tim Bowens, the Dolphins decided it wouldn't hurt to add another run-stuffing defensive tackle. That's why they went hard after Larry Chester from the start of the free agency signing period.

Their efforts were rewarded when Chester signed a five-year deal worth a reported \$10 million. The contract includes an option year that will kick in if the Dolphins give Chester a \$1 million bonus in March of 2006.

"Larry fits into what we do defensively as far as run stoppers," said Dolphins senior vice president Rick Spielman. "The hardest positions to find are defensive line and corner, and you can never have enough of those because of the injuries and things. So anytime you have an opportunity to add to that position, you take advantage of it."

In Chester, the Dolphins get an up-and-coming tackle who already has established his reputation as a run defender. Chester either will be used as a backup for Bowens and Daryl Gardener or a starter if the Dolphins go through with the idea of moving Gardener to left end.

Either way, the 6-2, 310-pound Chester should help a run defense that slumped badly last season after Gardener was lost because of a back problem.

In 11 games with Carolina last season, Chester finished with 55 tackles, half a sack and a fumble recovery. The tackle figure ranked second on the team among defensive linemen.

Chester's season was cut short by a broken left fibula he sustained in a Nov. 25 game against Atlanta. Because of the injury, some teams interested in signing Chester reportedly wanted to make any deal contingent on his health.

Such was not the case with the Dolphins, who gave Chester a physical at the scouting combine in Indianapolis and expect him to be ready sometime in June.

In the meantime, Chester will be spending a lot of his time in the weight room, which will be nothing new as evidenced by the fact he has bench-pressed 680 pounds.

"They're going to have to kick me out of here," said Chester, who had six tackles against the Dolphins in an October game. "I'm hoping they'll put a bed in the weight room so I can be closer to the facility."

Prior to joining the Panthers, the 26-year-old Chester spent three seasons with the Colts before leaving as an unrestricted free agent.

Always looking

The Dolphins have been consistent in saying they will always look at players who can make the team better. And they certainly did a lot of that early in the offseason.

How else to explain the full-court press they put on Chicago center Olin Kreutz despite the presence of veteran Tim Ruddy on the roster?

"Tim's a professional and Tim is a very good player," said Dolphins senior vice president Rick Spielman. "The only reason we would ever go after someone like an Olin Kreutz is because those guys never get on the market. It's very rare that you have a 24-year-old Pro Bowler out testing the free agent market."

"Olin was a situation that was unique, just like Ricky Williams. Very few times you get an opportunity to trade for a running back of Ricky Williams' caliber or sign an offensive lineman of Olin Kreutz's caliber. So anytime you have a shot to do something like that, you have to be as aggressive as you can and try to go out and get those players."

The Dolphins were aggressive, all right, but in the end Kreutz decided to go back to the Bears despite the fact they were offering less money. Chicago gave Kreutz a six-year, \$23 million deal, while the Dolphins were said to be offering \$25 million for the same duration.

"Olin is different than most guys are," said Spielman. "Olin is a very loyal guy, not only special as a player but as a person as well, and by taking less money to go back to Chicago that kind of tells you what type of person Olin is and why we went after him so hard."

Another high-profile free agent who visited the Dolphins facility was wide receiver Cris Carter.

The veteran, who has a home in Boca Raton, was still available as of March 18 and it appeared that Cleveland and St. Louis no longer were interested after Carter angered the Rams by postponing a meeting and turned off the Browns by saying there was no comparison between the Rams and Browns.

The Dolphins did not make Carter an offer during his visit, but it was expected the two sides would have further conversation. Before saying he really wanted to play for the Rams, Carter said something similar about the Dolphins on the day of his visit.

"I think they know I want to be here," Carter said. "They want me to be here. Let's see if the economics can be worked out. If I'm not a Dolphin, it's not because I didn't want to be here or they didn't want me here."

Among the other players who visited the Dolphins in March were wide receivers Patrick Johnson and Terrence Wilkins and Bears safety Tony Parrish.



KREUTZ

FREE AGENCY 2002

Mixon gets offer he can't refuse

Kenny Mixon established himself as a solid run defender in his first four seasons in the NFL, and his reward was a battle for his services in free agency.

It ended with the Minnesota Vikings winning Mixon's services with a four-year deal worth a reported \$17 million, including a \$3.4 million signing bonus.

The Cincinnati Bengals, Green Bay Packers and Washington Redskins also were in hot pursuit, while the Dolphins tried to re-sign their 1998 second-round pick.

"Minnesota made me very comfortable, and I'm excited they wanted me," said Mixon. "I got a great feel from Coach (Mike) Tice, and that team is very interested in becoming a winner again."

Mixon's contract also is said to include incentives based on his number of sacks. In four seasons in Miami, Mixon recorded only 6.5 sacks.

But that was never his forte. Stopping the run is what Mixon does well, and that's why he became a starter in his rookie season.

It's also why the Dolphins were disappointed they weren't able to re-sign him.

"It was to the point where Minnesota had significantly more money on the table than we had," said Dolphins senior vice president Rick Spielman. "We tried to bridge the gap but just couldn't get it close enough for him to make the decision to stay."

With the Vikings, Mixon will be coached by George O'Leary, who became the team's defensive line coach



Defensive end Kenny Mixon's ability to stop the run got him a lucrative contract with the Minnesota Vikings. Digest Photo/KEN KEIDEL

after his well-publicized and short-lived tenure as Notre Dame head coach.

Mixon will be part of a rebuilding job for a Minnesota defense that was ranked 30th against the run and 27th overall last season.

"This gets us started with a bang," said Tice. "It gives us flexibility to get some other guys, and Kenny is the guy we think will get our defense going from the left end position. Kenny was our No. 1 target. Our defense improved today."

How many can Dolphins keep?

As is usually the case, the Dolphins began the offseason hoping to re-sign as many of their free agents as possible, while also knowing that it was an unrealistic goal.

The salary cap allows only so much flexibility to retain all your players while trying to upgrade the roster at the same time. That's why so many of the Dolphins' free agents fell into the category of "We'd like to have him back but ..."

That was the situation involving practically every Dolphins unrestricted free agent with the exception of running back Lamar Smith, whose career in Miami basically ended the day the trade for Ricky Williams was consummated.

As of March 18, the list of remaining Dolphins unrestricted free agents included punter Matt Turk, defensive end Lorenzo Bromell, safety Scott McGarrahan and wide receiver Jeff Ogden.



TURK



BROMELL

The Dolphins lost their third unrestricted free agent when cornerback Terry Cousin agreed to terms on a four-year deal with the Carolina Panthers.

Bromell was believed to have drawn interest from Denver, Seattle and the Minnesota Vikings, who signed fellow Dolphins free agent defensive end Kenny Mixon; while the Jets were said to be pursuing punter Matt Turk, who would be reunited with former Dolphins special teams coach Mike Westhoff.

There was more certainty when it came to restricted free agent Jed Weaver and exclusive-rights free agents Adewale Ogunleye and Trent Gamble, all of whom were extended tender offers.

Weaver can still negotiate with other teams, but the Dolphins have the right to match any offer (they would not receive compensation if they decline to match). As exclusive-rights free agents, Ogunleye and Gamble cannot negotiate with any other team.

No time like the present for starting safety

The Detroit Lions wanted Brian Walker so badly they made contact with him the moment the free agency signing period began.

A few days later, they had lured the Dolphins' starting strong safety with a five-year contract worth a reported \$10 million. The deal is also said to include a \$2 million signing bonus.

The Lions signed Walker after also bringing in fellow Dolphins safety Brock Marion for a visit. The Lions reportedly were considering signing Marion even after picking up Walker to reunite the two, but Marion wound up re-signing with the Dolphins.

Ironically, Marion signed for about the same money as Walker, who wasn't willing to wait while the Dolphins negotiated with Bears free agent center Olin Kreutz.

"Brian and his agent decided to take the money when they had an opportunity up at Detroit and there was no way we could match it at the time," said Dolphins senior vice president Rick Spielman. "To say if it



BRIAN WALKER

would have gone on another week when Olin Kreutz fell apart, there sure would have been a possibility of doing something with Brian Walker, just like we were able to get Brock Marion done."

As a result, Walker wound up leaving the Dolphins for the second time.

He was claimed off waivers by Seattle after being released in 1999, but returned after one season with the Seahawks. In his second stint in Miami, Walker's career blossomed.

Walker tied for first in the AFC with seven interceptions in 2000 and he was second on the team with 99 tackles last season.

"He's got range, he's got man skills, a solid tackler and he's a smart kid," said Lions team president Matt Millen. "And he can run. That's something we've

been talking about for more than a year. He's a piece of the puzzle."

Unfortunately for Walker, he goes to a team that needs a lot of pieces after a disastrous 2-14 season.

OFFSEASON MOVES

Marion happy with quick move

Looking for a job was a lot more of a pleasant experience for Brock Marion this time around, but the end result again was that Marion stayed with the Dolphins.

And he's not planning on leaving anytime soon.

"It's not that easy getting rid of me," Marion said at the press conference to announce his signing of a five-year deal worth a reported \$10 million. "I'm very, very happy to be here. I told Coach (Dave) Wannstedt at the end of the season, I don't want to go anywhere if I don't have to."

Marion was free to shop his services after being released by the Dolphins on the last day of February because of a high salary-cap number.

The Dolphins were hoping to resign either Marion or Brian Walker, who became an unrestricted free agent on March 1, but negotiations with both were put on hold while the Dolphins awaited word on whether free agent center Olin Kreutz accepted their offer.

By the time Kreutz decided to resign with the Bears, Walker already had accepted an offer from the Lions. So the Dolphins turned their attention to Marion.

Marion's return means that the Dolphins will have nine starters back from a defense that was ranked fourth overall in the NFL and first against the pass.

"He's been there, he understands the scheme and he's going to continue to be the quarterback of the secondary," said defensive coordinator Jim Bates. "It's always a positive to have a guy like Brock who's played at a high level for years."

Marion has been in Miami since 1998 and has really come on the last two years. Marion earned his first Pro Bowl invitation for his work during the 2000 season and he was a first alternate last year.

But Marion attracted very little at-



Safety Brock Marion is looking to retire with the Dolphins, and his new contract very well might give him that opportunity. Digest Photo/KEN KEIDEL

tention on the free agent market last offseason and he wound up re-signing with the Dolphins in June.

Marion said it was always his hope to get his contract situation resolved as soon as possible, although he knew there was a possibility he might wind up leaving.

"In this day and age of the salary cap, you've got to prepare yourself for that," he said. "You've always got to

be ready to move. But the good thing is I'm here."

Marion will be 32 when the 2002 season begins, and he's hoping the new contract means he'll end his career with the Dolphins. The feeling is mutual.

Said Coach Dave Wannstedt: "Anytime you can have a quality, Pro Bowl player retire as a Miami Dolphin, that's special."

Hectic 24 hours for Tim Bowens

It seemed a given all along that the Dolphins would release Tim Bowens because of salary-cap considerations.

What wasn't expected was how quickly they would be able to re-sign him. In fact, there seemed to be no guarantee he would be returning to the Dolphins, period.



But Bowens' situation was resolved in a one-day span just before the start of free agency when he was waived and hours later re-signed to a three-year deal with two option years.

The cap-friendly deal is said to include a \$3 million signing bonus and could be worth a total of \$15 million. The Dolphins can pick up the last two years of the contract by giving Bowens a \$1.8 million bonus after the 2003 season.

"It came down to us wanting Tim and Tim saying, 'I want to be a Dolphin and see if I can get the Dolphins to the Super Bowl,'" said Coach Dave Wannstedt. "He's a big part of the success we've had."

The Dolphins and Bowens' agent, Drew Rosenhaus, had been negotiating a new deal for a few weeks but hadn't come to terms as the Feb. 28 deadline to get under the salary cap approached.

That prompted the move to release Bowens, which made him free to negotiate with any other team.

"We knew there was a risk releasing him, but we had to release him because of the cap," said Dolphins senior vice president Rick Spielman. "But Drew and ourselves were able to work out a deal where we could keep Tim Bowens. It came down to the last minute, just like it did last year."

After declining to exercise an option last offseason that would have voided the final year of his contract, Bowens agreed to restructure his contract.

With the new deal, Bowens won't have to worry about his contract being an issue for a little while.

"Here's the key, Tim was tired of doing the one-year deal," Rosenhaus said. "He's happy to get the signing bonus and get the security. When you see all the players who are getting cut, it's very satisfying to know you're going to be someplace for at least a few years."

McDuffie's new deal goes sour

There was never any guarantee that O.J. McDuffie would play for the Dolphins in 2002, but his career with the team also wasn't expected to end the way it seemingly has.

Just when it appeared the team had reached an agreement with McDuffie on a restructured contract, the veteran wide receiver instead was released.

The reason was a stipulation in the contract that was added at the last minute by McDuffie's representatives. The clause involved McDuffie's right to sue the team over the diagnosis and treatment of the 1999 toe injury that put his career in jeopardy.

"It was a hard situation because of what type of player O.J. McDuffie is and what he means not only to

the Miami Dolphins but to the community as well," said Dolphins senior vice president Rick Spielman. "We were just not able to come up with a solution at the last second before we had to release him."

The Dolphins have not publicly closed the door on McDuffie's return, but there now is a significant issue that would need to be resolved.

McDuffie sat out all of last season as he continued to nurse the toe injury he suffered during a November 1999 game against New England. Prior to being released, McDuffie was contemplating whether to have a third surgery on the toe.

McDuffie, the Dolphins' first-round pick in 1993, was the longest-tenured member of the team.

No more questions at QB

Deal proves faith in Fiedler

By ALAIN POUPART
Associate Editor

Jay Fiedler has yet to win over all Dolphins fans, and it's entirely possible he never will be able to.

But the five-year contract the Dolphins gave him early in the offseason was clear evidence that Fiedler has the confidence of the people who matter most — his coaches.

"Number one, obviously, you're looking at the production of the player. And I don't think that there's a player on our football team that's had more of an impact in helping us win," said Coach Dave Wannstedt. "And Jay has proven that he can win when you look at the record, 11-5, but when you look at the situation that we were in this year. To be able to bring a football team back five times and win games in this league is a great accomplishment."

Wannstedt said shortly after the Dolphins' 2001 season ended with a disappointing playoff loss against Baltimore that re-signing Fiedler was among his top priorities, and he obviously meant it.

Almost three weeks before the start of free agency, Fiedler got a five-year deal worth a reported \$25 million. The contract reportedly includes a package of incentives, as well as a clause that stipulates that by April 2004 the Dolphins must decide whether to pay \$2 million to enforce the last year of the contract.

The new contract replaces Fiedler's old deal, which had one year left. Fiedler had the option of voiding that last year and was prepared to do so.

But all along Fiedler maintained that his first preference was to stay in Miami.

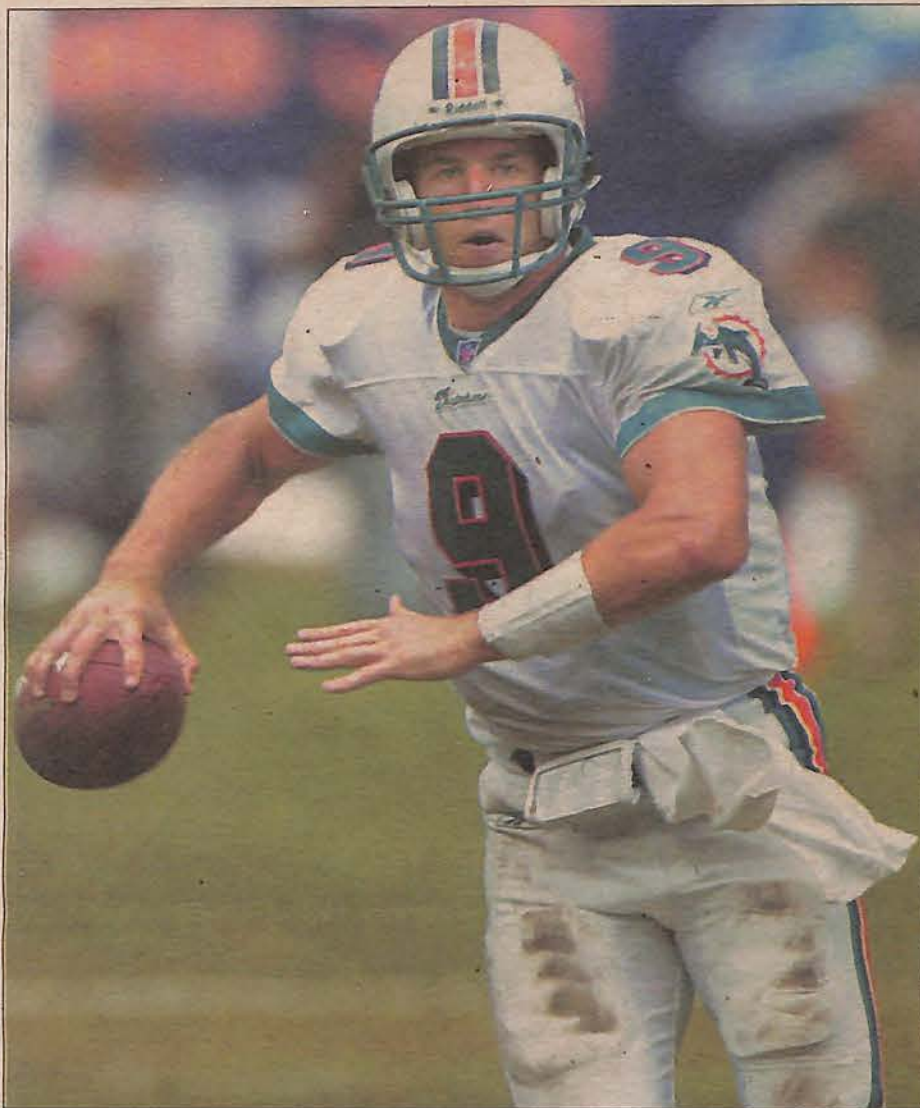
As it turned out, Fiedler never tested the free agent market to see what kind of deal he could have gotten. The Dolphins would have had the right to match any offer, but were happy it never got to that point.

"I think the excitement level at coming back was definitely high, knowing that the coaching staff is backing me, knowing that they have the respect that I could be a winning quarterback here and that I'm the quarterback that they wanted," Fiedler said. "The excitement level also is very high after the hiring of (offensive coordinator) Norv Turner."

"I wanted to get it done as quickly as possible so I could start working with him and start working with the offense in the offseason. I didn't want to drag this out and be in limbo."

The signing of Fiedler pretty much ended any discussion of bringing in a high-profile quarterback in the offseason, a far cry from the spring of 2001.

Fiedler spent the offseason after his first year as a starter reading stories about the Dolphins possibly being in-



Jay Fiedler says the new five-year contract he signed in the offseason was an indication he has "arrived" as an NFL quarterback. Digest Photo/KEN KEIDEL

terested in signing free agent Brad Johnson or making a trade for either Trent Green or Matt Hasselbeck.

Before signing his new contract, Fiedler had to deal with reports that the Dolphins might try to lure former Cowboys Pro Bowl quarterback Troy Aikman out of retirement to rejoin Turner.

"You know, you hear all the rumors in the papers. I went up and spoke to Dave Wannstedt about my situation and he clearly stated that I was the guy that they wanted," Fiedler said. "To me, that was all I needed to hear. Anything from the media and from newspaper and TV sources, I can't take as credible. I've got to take the word of my head coach as the most credible source."

He's been honest and open with me since I've been here and I didn't expect to hear anything otherwise."

In negotiating his client's new deal with the Dolphins, agent Brian Levy presented team officials with a 20-page booklet that compared Fiedler's numbers to those of five other quarterbacks around the league — Green, Johnson, former Baltimore starter Elvis Grbac, Steelers Pro Bowl selection Kordell Stewart and Giants starter Kerry Collins.

Of the 30 statistical categories from last season that Levy used, Fiedler ranked first among the six QBs in 12 and last in none.

But stats can't gauge the leadership Fiedler has exhibited in his two years

in Miami with his willingness to sacrifice his body for the good of the team.

"Our players electing Jay to be one of the co-captains last year, before the season was even over I think was a real statement of how this football team believes in Jay Fiedler and all the qualities that go along with that," Wannstedt said.

Another reason for the Dolphins' confidence in Fiedler is the fact he got considerably better down the stretch last season.

Fiedler arrived at a crossroads after a dreadful three-interception performance in a 24-0 loss to the Jets in mid-November. The performance was so bad that it was suggested that backup Ray Lucas replace Fiedler.

But Fiedler responded with a tremendous effort in a 34-27 comeback win at Buffalo when he threw for 260 yards and three touchdowns.

Over the last seven games, Fiedler had 11 touchdown passes and only four interceptions, three of them coming in the forgettable shutout loss at San Francisco.

"Ever since Coach Wannstedt named me the starter, he's shown that he was going to stick by me," Fiedler said. "Certainly there were a few times that he was under a little bit of pressure to pull the trigger and go with the next guy, but he went out on a limb and said, 'Jay Fiedler's going to be my quarterback.' I hope that I've rewarded him for that decision. We've come to a point now where we're rewarding each other."

But for Fiedler, the financial reward he just got is sure to bring some added pressure. If not that, then it will come from the commitment the Dolphins have made.

"Certainly my responsibilities are heightened right now," Fiedler said. "The Dolphins have put me in a position to be a leader on this team with this contract. They've kind of labeled me as one of their guys. Certainly with that comes an added responsibility; not that I wasn't trying to be a leader beforehand, but certainly by them designating me as a leader it heightens it a little bit more."

Still, it's a small price to pay for someone who less than five years ago was serving as an assistant coach at Hofstra and was being advised to give up on the idea of playing in the NFL.

At the press conference to announce his signing, Fiedler was asked if the new contract meant that he had "made it."

"Yeah, I think it does," was the answer. "It puts me in that category of being a starting quarterback in the NFL. The contract certainly puts my salary level comparable to where other starters in the league are being paid and with that comes the affirmation that I have arrived."

FIEDLER'S COMPANY

In his negotiations with the Dolphins, Jay Fiedler's agent compared Fiedler's stats with those of five other starting quarterbacks around the NFL. Here's a look at some of those numbers from the 2001 season.

Quarterback	Team	Att	Comp	Yds	Pct.	TD	Int	Rat.
Jay Fiedler	Miami	450	273	3290	60.7	20	19	80.3
Kordell Stewart	Pittsburgh	442	266	3109	60.2	14	11	81.7
Brad Johnson	Tampa Bay	559	340	3406	60.8	13	11	77.7
Kerry Collins	N.Y. Giants	568	327	3764	57.6	19	16	77.1
Trent Green	Kansas City	523	296	3783	56.6	17	24	71.1
Elvis Grbac	Baltimore	467	265	3033	56.7	15	18	71.1

New offensive coordinator

Turner a big-play believer

By ALAIN POUPART
Associate Editor

The hiring of Norv Turner as assistant head coach/offensive coordinator was generally seen as a coup for the Dolphins.

ANALYSIS

But exactly what does his arrival mean for the Dolphins offense? How big of a difference can Turner, working with personnel that has been upgraded in the offseason, make for an offense that has come up woefully short in the playoffs the last five years?

Given Turner's track record, there's every reason to be optimistic he can help turn around an offense that hasn't finished higher than 16th in the league in total yardage since 1997.

Turner has produced good results with Hall of Fame-caliber material, as well as talent that could be more aptly described as marginal.

In 11 years as an offensive coordinator or head coach, Turner's teams have finished in the top 10 in the NFL in total offense five times and have never been worse than 18th. By comparison, the Dolphins haven't finished in the top 10 in total offense since 1995 and they have been 20th or worse each of the last three seasons.

Sure, Turner had future Hall of Famers Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin in Dallas when he was the coordinator of an offense that was ranked fourth two straight years. But quarterbacks Brad Johnson and Gus Frerotte also made their only Pro Bowl appearances playing under Turner, who also was the head coach when Trent Green had his one successful season in the NFL.

"If you look through Norv's history, every quarterback that he's been with has been successful," said Dolphins starter Jay Fiedler. "They have probably thrown for more yards than they did under previous coordinators and have gone to the Pro Bowl when they haven't gone before being with Norv. Success like that just doesn't come. That's something that I'm sure will improve for me as well."

Fiedler isn't the only Dolphins player who has reason to be excited about Turner's arrival.

Fullback Rob Konrad and tight ends Jed Weaver and Alonzo Mayes immediately come to mind. Under Chan Gailey the past two seasons, those two positions involved a whole lot of blocking and little else.

Weaver was the Dolphins' leading receiver among tight ends each of the last two seasons, but he caught only 10 passes in 2000 and only 18 last year. As for Konrad, he caught 14 passes two seasons ago and only five last year.

Under Turner, that figures to



Norv Turner, who tutored rookie quarterback Drew Brees last year, helped San Diego go from 28th in the league in total offense to 11th.

Photo/DONALD MIRALLE/Allsport

change. Turner has always made good use of the fullback and tight end in the passing game.

Turner's tight ends have caught 40 passes or more in a season six times in the last 11 years. The last time a Dolphins tight end had that many catches was in 1995 when Eric Green finished with 43 receptions.

Fullback Larry Centers led the Turner-coached Redskins in catches in both 1999 and 2000, finishing with 69 and 81 catches those two seasons. Daryl Johnston had 50 catches for the Cowboys in 1993.

The Dolphins' starting fullbacks have managed a total of 75 catches over the last five years.

"I remember when Chan took the job, Daryl called me and forewarned me that I wasn't going to get many touches," Konrad said the day Turner was hired. "I haven't talked to him

about Norv, but he ran the ball a bunch and caught a lot of passes with him. I'm looking forward to working with Norv."

Turner's offensive philosophy combines elements of John Robinson's USC running game, as well as Don Coryell's passing game with the San Diego Chargers.

Rams head coach Mike Martz picked up some of his offensive tendencies from Turner, with whom he worked in Washington.

While Gailey's play-calling the last two seasons could be categorized as conservative, it's difficult to place a label on Turner's offense.

On one hand, his offense can be wide open. His quarterback passed for over 3,400 yards three of the last four years, including last season when Doug Flutie threw for 3,464 yards for the San Diego Chargers.

But Turner also has had a back rush for over 1,200 yards eight of his 11 seasons as an offensive coordinator or head coach, with the list of runners including Smith, Terry Allen, Stephen Davis and LaDainian Tomlinson.

"The best offenses I've been in, we've had four or five guys catch over 30 balls," Turner said. "The one thing that I think that has kind of been a trademark of our offense, the receivers are usually in the top four or five in average per catch. It means we want to get big plays out of the wideouts. I'd like to see those guys in that 16-17 yards per catch (range). A few years ago we had two guys that had over 60 catches and averaged 18 yards, 18.4 a catch. So you're getting big plays from your outside guys."

"We're going to make big plays. To score points on offense, you have to be explosive."

Turner got a preview last summer of the talent he'll be working with when he came to South Florida for three days of practices between the Chargers and Dolphins.

Among those who caught his attention were Fiedler and wide receiver Chris Chambers, who averaged 18.4 yards per catch as a rookie last season.

"The three days we practiced here before the preseason game, I think I got a pretty good feel for this football team and it's a very good football team," Turner said. "I think that part of it is truly exciting because we do this for the chance to win."

The hiring of Turner didn't become official until Feb. 5, but it had been anticipated almost from the time the Chargers fired Coach Mike Riley at the end of a 5-11 season.

Turner exercised a clause in his contract allowing him to leave if he wasn't named as Riley's successor, a role that went to former Redskins coach Marty Schottenheimer.

Before joining the Dolphins, Turner interviewed with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers about their then-vacant head-coaching position before pulling himself out of contention the day after the Super Bowl.

Turner didn't deny that the biggest reason he signed a three-year contract with the Dolphins was the chance to be reunited with his good friend Wannstedt, with whom he worked at USC and with the Cowboys.

"I chose to get out of my contract to have an opportunity once this job was open to come and be with Dave," Turner said. "Dave's a big part of it, the organization, all the things that go into that and then to be with a real good football team."

The question is whether Turner's presence will make it a better team.

THE TURNER FILE

Full name: Norval Eugene Turner

Born: May 17, 1952

Hometown: LeJeune, N.C.

Family: Wife, Nancy; three children, Scott, 19, Stephanie, 17, Drew, 12

College: Oregon

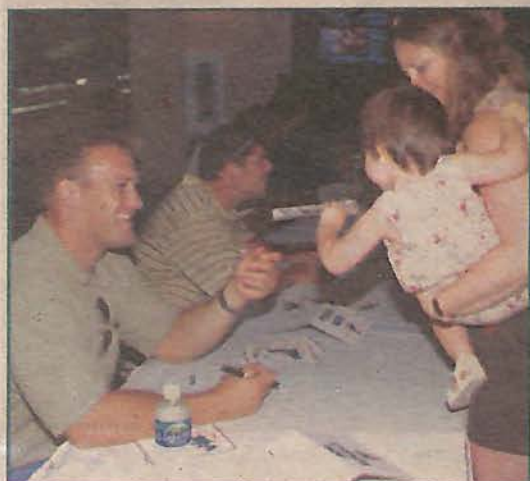
Playing career: Three-year letterman at Oregon, no NFL experience

College coaching career: Oregon, graduate assistant, 1975; USC, receivers coach (1976-79), defensive backs coach (1980), quarterbacks coach (1981-83), offensive coordinator (1984).

NFL coaching career: Los Angeles Rams, receivers coach (1985-86), receivers/tight ends coach (1987-90); Dallas Cowboys, offensive coordinator (1991-93); Washington Redskins (1994-2000); San Diego Chargers, offensive coordinator (2001).

EXCLUSIVE Dolphins

DOL-FAN FEST AND SELECT-A-SEAT TO BE HELD AT PRO PLAYER STADIUM ON APRIL 20 AT 10:00 AM



Player autographs are a fun part of Dol-Fan Fest.

Dol-Fan Fest presented by Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida will take place on Saturday, April 20, at Pro Player Stadium. Gates open at 10:00 a.m.

Dol-Fan Fest will include the first Select-A-Seat of the year, starting at 10:00 a.m. at Gate F. Dol-Fan Fest will take place between Gates F, G and H outside in the SportsTown area. The NFL Draft coverage starts at 12:00 p.m. The day's activities conclude at 4:00 p.m.

Activities you will find from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. include: live draft coverage by 560 WQAM, player and alumni autographs from 12:30-3:30 p.m., player question and answer sessions, the unveiling of the 2002 Cheerleader Squad, locker room tours, Dolphins Theater, T.D.'s Fifth Birthday Party, Sony Playstation tournaments, web site area with player live chats, and inflatable games and interactive area.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to celebrate the Dol-Fan Fest, Select-A-Seat and the NFL Draft with the Miami Dolphins.



Inflatable games are one of the highlights of the interactive area.

MIAMI DOLPHINS MINI CAMP AND QB SCHOOL STARTS APRIL 26

Get your first look at running back Ricky Williams and the rest of the Dolphins as the team plays host to its first Mini Camp and Quarterback School of the 2002 season starting on Friday, April 26.

The camps will be held at the team's training facility on the campus of Nova Southeastern University. There is no charge for admission or parking for the practices.

From the north, take I-95 South: Dol-Fans coming from the south, should take I-95 North. Exit I-95 at I-595 West. Take I-595 West to the University Drive exit. Proceed off exit and turn left onto University Drive (going south) Go past four traffic lights, crossing S.W. 30th Street, and make a u-turn at the first crossover. Take the first right and follow spectator parking signs to the free public garage. If the garage is full, follow directions from Nova Public Safety.



There isn't a bad seat in the house at the training facility.

DOLPHINS MINI CAMP

Friday, April 26

Afternoon Practice

Saturday, April 27

Morning Practice and Afternoon Practice

Sunday, April 28

Morning Practice and Afternoon Practice

DOLPHINS QUARTERBACK SCHOOL

Tuesday, April 30

Afternoon Practice

Wednesday, May 1

Afternoon Practice

Thursday, May 2

Afternoon Practice

For practice times and weather information, please
Call the Training Camp hotline at (954) 452-7004.



NEW SEASON TICKET HOLDER CUSTOMER SERVICE SECTION ON WEB SITE

The Miami Dolphins are committed to providing our season ticket holders with the highest level of customer service.

To accomplish this goal we have added a season ticket holder customer service section to our web site, located at www.miamidolphins.com.

Season ticket holders with questions or comments for the Dolphins ticket office, club seat department, or luxury suite department, can contact us via e-mail through the customer service web site.

The site also gives season ticket holders the ability to change their address, request additional seats, ticket upgrades or seat relocations, all while getting the latest Dolphins news on the team's official web site.

In addition, season ticket holders can now renew their tickets with a credit card on our 2002 Season Ticket Holder Renewal Payment Form. This secure server accepts American Express, Visa or MasterCard. Payments must be for the full amount of the invoice.

IMPORTANT TICKET E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Season Tickets seasonitix@proplayerstadium.com
Group Tickets grouptix@proplayerstadium.com
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Luxury Suites clubtix@proplayerstadium.com



THE TRADITION CONTINUES



UPCOMING DOLPHINS SPECIAL EVENTS

HEALTHSOUTH Doctors' Hospital/Miami Dolphins Charity Golf Tournament



Dolphins Head Coach Dave Wannstedt has participated in the tournament.

Current Miami Dolphins players, coaches and alumni will take a swing in the fifth annual HEALTHSOUTH Doctors' Hospital/Miami Dolphins Charity Golf Tournament on Monday, April 29, 2002, at the Lago Mar Country Club in Plantation.

Those playing in the tournament will have the unique experience of spending the day golfing with current and former players and coaches.

Proceeds from this year's tournament will benefit the Miami Dolphins Foundation, which supports children's charities throughout the South Florida community. A portion of the proceeds will be used for the Miami Dolphins Player Assistance Fund, which was established to help former players who experience devastating circumstances.

For information, call the Miami Dolphins Community Relations Department at (954) 452-7171.

Miami Dolphins Fishing Tournament to Benefit the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

Over 25 Miami Dolphins players, coaches and alumni will be taking part in the sixth annual Miami Dolphins Fishing Tournament to benefit the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation on Saturday, June 1, 2002, at the Miami Beach Marina.

The entry fee is \$1,000 for four anglers and a Miami Dolphins player, \$750 for four anglers, or \$500 for boats 29 feet and under fishing only two anglers. Additional tickets are available for those who want to attend the Captains' Party or Award Ceremony.

Last year's event raised \$75,000 for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Those aboard the boat catching the most total fish in pounds will be the winner of a once in a lifetime opportunity for four people to travel with the Miami Dolphins to a selected away game on the team charter and stay at the team hotel!

For more information on the Miami Dolphins Fishing Tournament or sponsorship opportunities, please call the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation at (786) 275-8000.



Rob Konrad during the 2001 tournament

Dolphins Jr. Training Camp And T.D.'s Teamwork Program

The Dolphins Jr. Training Camp and T.D.'s Teamwork program continue to go to elementary schools throughout the tri-county area. For more information call (954) 452-7100.

Upcoming Events for Youth Programs and the Dol-Fan Experience include:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| March 23 | The Orange Blossom Parade in Davie |
| March 28-31 | The Miami Beach Sports and Fitness Festival in Miami |
| April 27 | The Miami Dolphins youth football coaches meeting at the Training Camp Facility |

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— Dan LeSauter, Herald Columnist



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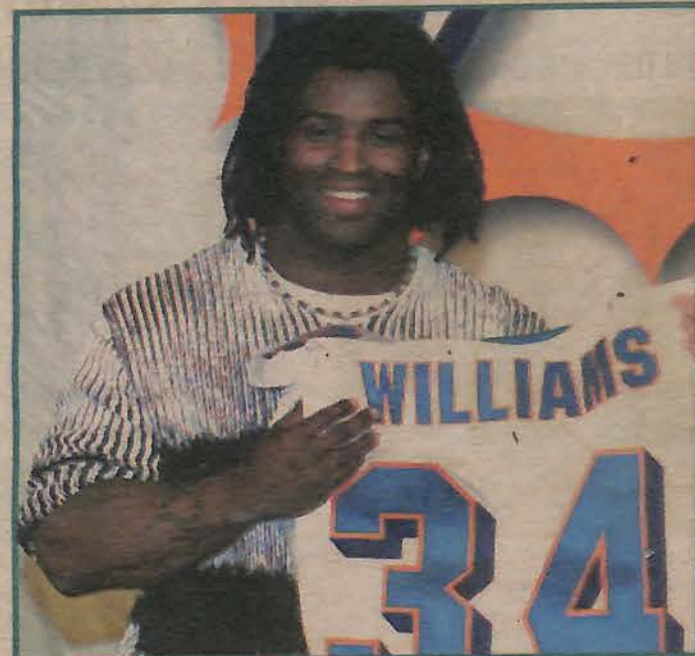


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DOLPHINS AUCTIONS

Dol-Fans Can Bid on Game-Used Items and Autographed Memorabilia From Their Favorite Players To Benefit Charity

Miami Dolphins fans have the opportunity to bid on Dolphins game-used and autographed memorabilia while online on MiamiDolphins.com. There is new one-of-a-kind authentic merchandise signed by Dolphins players posted on

the site for a period of 10 days, and the site is constantly updated with new items. Some of the unique items include game-worn jerseys, gloves, socks and shoes from your favorite players.

To see the items, go to www.MiamiDolphins.com and click on "Dolphins Auctions" button on the left side of the home page. The NFL and Players Inc., the licensing and marketing arm of the NFL Players Association, are partnering to authenticate player-related merchandise for the online venue.

Net proceeds from the Dolphins items being auctioned off on MiamiDolphins.com will go to the Miami Dolphins Foundation. The Miami Dolphins Foundation supports children's charities throughout the South Florida community.



Wide receiver Chris Chambers signs a football for the auction.



Linebacker Zach Thomas lends his signature to a helmet.



exclusive

DOLPHINS IN THE COMMUNITY

Dave and Jan Wannstedt Raise Money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Head Coach Dave Wannstedt and his wife, Jan, were honorary chairs for a celebrity dinner and auction Friday, March 15, 2002, for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital at the Miami Dolphins Training Facility in Davie. The annual event "A Night of Miracles" helped raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. St. Jude treats thousands of children each year who have cancer or other illnesses. The committee chair was Cheryl M. DeLeonardis.

Over 600 guests were at the event, 150 more than last year's attendees. Many current Miami Dolphins players were on hand at the event to show their support for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Guests also had the opportunity to mingle with Miami Dolphins alumni who came out to support the worthy cause. "A Night of Miracles" featured dinner, entertainment and both live and silent auctions.

Prizes included the unique experience of traveling with the team on the team plane to an away game, a Harley Davidson motorcycle and a trip to Alaska. NBC 6 anchor Tony Segreto served as the evening's emcee.



Dolphins Head Coach Dave Wannstedt is active in his support of St. Jude Hospital.

Dolphins Players Help Students at Local Schools Kick Off F.C.A.T. Week

Students at Sunshine Elementary and Lauderhill Middle had special visitors in their schools on Friday, March 8, 2002. Quarterback Ray Lucas visited fourth and fifth graders at Sunshine Elementary School. His teammate linebacker Twan Russell attended a pep rally at Lauderhill Middle School.

The players spoke at pep rallies to motivate over 500 kids who had been preparing for five weeks for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

While the players were at the schools they watched the schools' step team and the cheerleading squad perform. "I like to see the smiles on the kids' faces," said Russell. "The goal is to give them a reason to do better."

The F.C.A.T. tests both elementary and middle school students in reading and math. The test ran from March 11-13.

Dolphins Help Area Student-Athletes Prepare For The SAT/ACT

On March 16, 2002, the Miami Dolphins played host to the team's third annual SAT/ACT prep class and football skill testing for high school football players from the tri-county area at the team's training facility.

The student-athletes participated in a two-hour training session for the SAT/ACT, conducted by Stanley Kaplan Testing Services. In addition, the student-athletes were also given two hours of athletic testing for them to gauge knowledge of their football ability.

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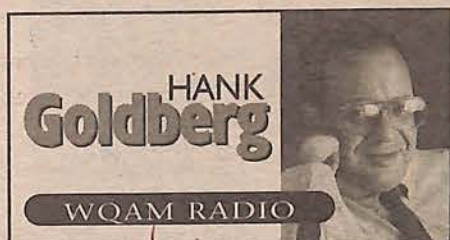
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THE TRADITION CONTINUES

Funny how things work out

Remember that steamy night almost three summers ago? The Dolphins and New Orleans were hooking up in a preseason event at the Stadium Formerly Known as Joe Robbie. The exact date was Aug. 13, 1999 and it marked the debut of



Miami's fifth-round selection, Cecil Collins, the second running back tabbed in that draft (J.J. Johnson was the first), and the seventh in a decade.

Sammie Smith, Aaron Craver, Terry Kirby, Karim Abdul-Jabbar and John Avery were the others. In fact, more are doing time than enjoying playing time.

That same night, the Saints launched the career of Ricky Williams, the back for whom they gave up an entire draft. Ricky ran through, over and around the Dolphins defense. He also hurt his ankle, an injury that haunted his entire rookie year.

Miami's locker room was giddy that night. Cecil had also been impressive. But it was Williams who looked like the total package. Who would have thought that he would end up here?

It was a curious chain of events that started back a year ago when the P.D. (Post-Ditka) administration drafted another running back, Deuce McAllister, in the first round. When personnel director Rick Spielman called Saints GM Randy Mueller to ask about a lower pick, he also inquired where this left Williams.

Mueller took it as an idle, conversational question, although it became more of a story in South Florida.

It was a disappointing year for the Saints. They lost their last four games and failed to make the playoffs. While Ricky had 1,700 all-purpose



Little did anyone know when Ricky Williams played in his first NFL game at Pro Player Stadium in August of 1999 that he would be joining the Dolphins less than three years later.
Digest Photo/KEN KEIDEL

yards, he failed to crack 100 rushing in the last month of the season. In the key game at Tampa, he was held to less than 30 yards.

That, combined with 20 fumbles over three years and the presence of

McAllister, who was a Mueller-Jim Haslett choice, pushed them toward moving Williams, who had gone to Mueller and asked to stay.

It was a great negotiation for the Dolphins.

They caught a break in that there wasn't any real interest from other franchises. So they hung tough. Think about what they might have picked up at No. 25 and think about Ricky Williams, who, except for not having the same kind of speed, resembles another Texas Longhorn, Earl Campbell.

Why there was not more interest is puzzling. As another coach told me, "Norv always gets a running back," referring to new offensive coordinator Norv Turner. In Dallas, he had Emmitt Smith. With the Redskins it was Stephen Davis, and last year, in San Diego, he had LaDainian Tomlinson, the rookie from TCU.

As the season wore on, L.T. wore out, not just because he hit the rookie wall but because of an offensive line that was not very good.

The Fins have some major question marks up front. Two left tackles are coming back from season-ending injuries, as is the left guard. The free agent they signed in the hope of improving the play at right guard has not played for the better part of two seasons.

And, let's face it, they tried to upgrade the center position when they pursued Olin Kreutz.

They also are not certain where they stand at tight end. So they will use what's left of their draft to help those areas.

As for what it will take to make the big run, they seem to be looking to apply the Patriots' formula of low-priced veterans with some ability left. The Pats had a number of those, including seven ex-Dolphins. There will be another new talent pool when veteran players face their new release dates of June 1.

The only downside to the Williams deal is the end of a fun tradition, the draft party. Since they don't pick until late in the third round, it would be more like the "Survivor" series.

Or perhaps they should just have a "Welcome Ricky" party. Dolphins are properly jacked over this one.

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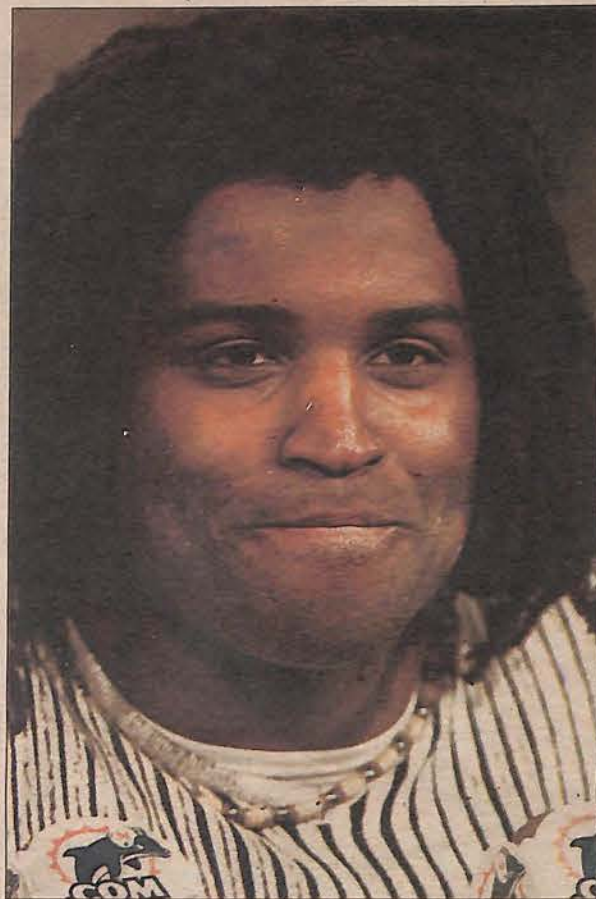
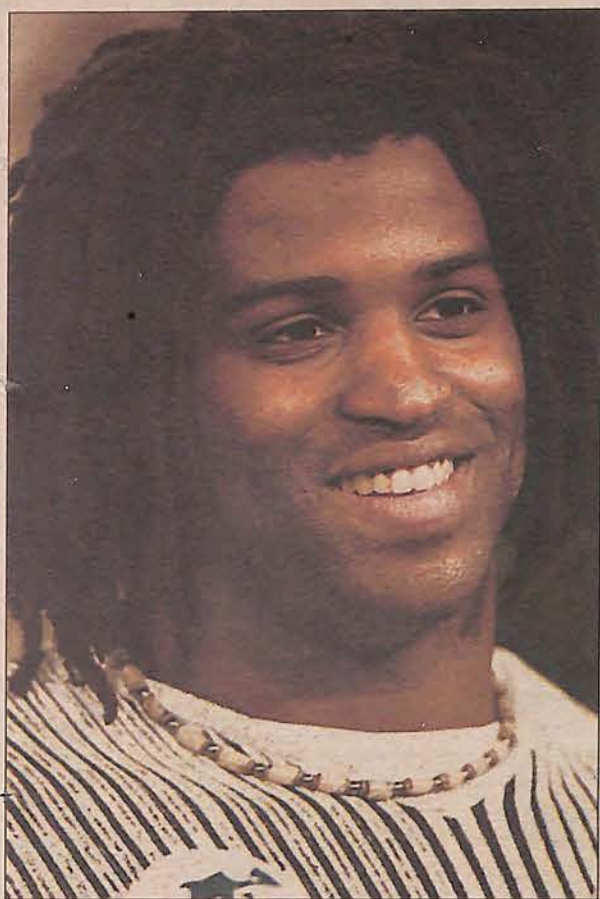
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LANDING A BIG PRIZE

By ALAIN POUPART
Associate Editor

Finalizing the trade for Ricky Williams was a long and tedious process for the Dolphins. But after waiting so long for a franchise running back, that was a pretty small inconvenience.

After days upon days of highly publicized negotiations, which included everything from a third team getting involved to threats of pulling Williams off the market and more twists and turns than your average miniseries, the Dolphins and New Orleans Saints finally struck a deal on March 9.

And the Dolphins achieved their No. 1 goal of the offseason, landing a prime-time back, and did so with the most acclaimed player to join the team since a certain quarterback was drafted in 1983.

"We all know we wanted to make a move at the running back position and to get somebody like him, that's big," said new offensive coordinator Norv Turner. "When I said hello to him, I told him, 'Get ready because you're going to get a chance to show us what you can do.'"

Despite being only 24 years old, Williams already has shown a lot, whether it be winning the Heisman Trophy, setting the all-time NCAA rushing record (since broken) or rushing for 1,245 yards for the Saints last season.

That's why the Dolphins had to give New Orleans their first-round pick this year (the 25th overall) and a third-rounder next year that will become a second-rounder if Williams rushes for at least 1,200 yards or a first-rounder if he reaches 1,500 yards.

In addition, the teams will swap places in the fourth round, with the Dolphins moving up from 27th in the round to 16th.

The Dolphins considered it a small price to pay for a running back of Williams' caliber.

"To say you're going to pick a guy like Ricky Williams with the 25th pick in the draft, you're

Trade for Williams could be answer for running game

kidding yourself," said Dolphins senior vice president Rick Spielman. "Ricky is someone that we knew we weren't going to be able to get at that low a pick. This was a chance for us to get a player with significant talent that you wouldn't have seen at that low a draft pick."

The trade was consummated about six weeks after the Saints approached the Dolphins at the Senior Bowl to gauge their interest in Williams.

Trade negotiations began in mid-February and heated up in the first week of March, and every day it seemed there was a new development.

The Saints' initial asking price was believed to be two first-round picks, while the Dolphins were said to want a second-round pick in addition to Williams. There were reports suggesting the Saints wanted cornerback Patrick Surtain in the deal, but Spielman quickly said Surtain wasn't going anywhere.

The Cleveland Browns also began talking to the Saints, and they were said to be offering their No. 1 pick in the middle of the first round. Then Browns officials denied they were willing to give up their No. 1 pick, which again made the Dolphins the favorites to land Williams.

After the Dolphins made what was said to be a final offer of picks in the first and fourth rounds this year along with the conditional 2003 third-round pick for Williams and a third-round choice this year, Saints coach Jim Haslett said he was ready to pull Williams off the market in a couple of days.

Three days later, the deal was done.

"It was something that took some time, but that was something you couldn't rush because you're dealing with a major player and you're dealing with a first-round pick, so it's something that's not done overnight," said Spielman. "That was something that took a lot of conversation and a lot of hours going back and forth and coming up with something you felt was fair for both clubs."

Williams is no stranger to being part of a major trade. He made history in April of 1999 by becoming the only player to ever make up a team's entire draft after former Saints coach Mike Ditka sent eight picks to Washington to move up from 12th to fifth in the first round.

The expectations placed on Williams upon his arrival in New Orleans were sky-high and it was almost impossible for him to live up to them.

They might not be quite as absurd in Miami, but Williams nonetheless will be expected to revive a running game that's been mostly dormant for almost two decades.

"When you bring in a Ricky Williams, you're bringing in a guy who's proven himself over the past three years to be a solid, A-list running back in this league," said quarterback Jay Fiedler. "That certainly takes our running game to the next level."

Williams' rushing totals have gone up every year since he entered the NFL. After rushing for 884 yards in 12 games during an injury-plagued rookie season, Williams gained an even 1,000 yards in the first 10 games of 2000 before his season was cut short because of a broken left ankle.

Last season, Williams was able to stay healthy and he finished ninth in the NFL in rushing and his 1,756 yards from scrimmage was the fifth-highest total in the league behind those of Priest Holmes, Marshall Faulk, Ahman Green and Curtis Martin.

"Ricky still hasn't reached his capacity," said Kansas City pro personnel director Bill

See WILLIAMS, next page



Ricky Williams' rushing total has increased every year since he joined the New Orleans Saints as the sole member of their 1999 draft class.

Digest File Photo

WILLIAMS, from preceding page

Kuharich, who was the Saints' general manager when they drafted Williams. "He went through a whole year healthy and had 1,250 yards. He's a guy who isn't near reaching max. He's got 1,500-, 1,600-, 1,700-, 1,800-yard seasons in him."

But while Williams is confident he can deliver for the Dolphins, he does not want to be viewed as a savior.

"I don't think a team that has been in the playoffs the last five years and has won 11 games the past two years needs a savior," Williams said. "I am just a good player coming to a really good team and trying to help get them to the next level."

"They are just adding a good player, so I am going to be surrounded with talent. I am not going to feel like it's my job to win games. I just have to do my part and we should win."

Williams' departure from New Orleans became a topic of conversation after the Saints spent their first-round pick on Deuce McAllister last spring, just two years after devoting their entire draft to Williams.

The Dolphins reportedly contacted New Orleans about Williams last year, but the Saints

couldn't make a trade then because of the cap hit they would have taken.

The Saints were willing to trade Williams because they feel McAllister is more explosive and versatile, but another reason might have been a less-than-perfect relationship between Haslett and Williams.

Whatever the reason, the Dolphins were glad they got the opportunity to pick up Williams. And although he wasn't looking to get out of New Orleans, Williams wasn't displeased by the outcome, either.

"It was kind of nerve-racking because I wasn't sure what was going to happen; my future was very unsure," Williams said. "People don't realize that it's not just playing football, but I've got to move here and live here. It's tough. It's tough to be transplanted, but the situation makes everything OK and this is one of the best places in the world to live, so I just feel so lucky. I can't explain how lucky and how happy I am to be here. It really is like a dream come true."

The same could be said for a franchise that just landed its first Heisman Trophy winner and, more importantly, its best running back in decades, if not ever.

A familiar scene for Lamar Smith

This must have seemed so painfully familiar for Lamar Smith.

In April of 1999, Smith saw his starting job with New Orleans disappear when the Saints traded their entire draft for Ricky Williams. Now it was happening again, with Williams' arrival in Miami signaling the end of Smith's days with the Dolphins.



SMITH

Coach Dave Wannstedt said as much after the Dolphins and Saints finalized the long-anticipated trade on the morning of March 9.

After the way he struggled last season, there was no guarantee Smith would have been back anyway. But the acquisition of Williams, in addition to the signing of Robert Edwards and the presence of 2001 third-round pick Travis Minor, eliminated any chance of that happening.

Wannstedt called Smith before the trade for Williams was consummated and left a message informing him of the deal.

"Obviously, at this position with Travis Minor and Robert Edwards and if we pick up another young back, Lamar's probably going to be looking for other opportunities," Wannstedt said. "But I did call him and I wanted that to be on record and let him know what was happening before it actually came about."

Smith entered the offseason as an unrestricted free agent, and the Carolina Panthers reportedly were interested in his services. But there won't be a bidding war for a 31-year-old running back who averaged a paltry 3.1 yards per carry last season.

Despite his disappointing 2001 season, it shouldn't be forgotten that Smith leaves the Dolphins with the third-best two-year rushing total in team history. He also had the best playoff performance in franchise history, with his 40-carry, 209-yard show against the Indianapolis Colts.

But here, like in New Orleans, he simply couldn't compete with Ricky Williams.

And, rest assured, Williams was well aware of the Dolphins' struggles with the running game.

"I am familiar," he said. "I am familiar that Dan Marino was here and a lot of passing was going on — and I'll still catch passes — but obviously they have been hungry for a top-tier running game and I hope that I am the one who can bring it here."

BIG DEALS *Ranking the biggest trades in Dolphins history in terms of star power*

- 1. March 8, 2002:** The Dolphins trade a first-round pick in 2002, a fourth-round pick in 2002 and a conditional third-round choice in 2003 to New Orleans for RB Ricky Williams and a fourth-round choice in 2002.
- 2. April 13, 1970:** The Dolphins send a first-round pick to Baltimore as compensation for head coach Don Shula.
- 3. Jan. 27, 1970:** The Dolphins trade a first-round pick in 1970 to Cleveland for WR Paul Warfield.
- 4. March 24, 1969:** The Dolphins trade LB John Bramlett, QB Kim Hammond and a 5th-round pick in 1970 to Boston for LB Nick Buoniconti.
- 5. April 17, 1978:** The Dolphins trade S Vern Roberson, WR Freddie Solomon and 1st- and 5th-round picks in 1978 to San Francisco for RB Delvin Williams.
- 6. Oct. 9, 1985:** The Dolphins trade first- and second-round picks in 1986 to Tampa Bay for LB Hugh Green.
- 7. April 1, 1993:** The Dolphins trade a second-round pick in 1993 and a third-round choice in 1994 to New England for WR Irving Fryar.
- 8. Aug. 15, 1985:** The Dolphins trade the rights to WR Anthony Carter to Minnesota for LB Robin Sendlein and a second-round pick in 1986.
- 9. March 29, 1995:** The Dolphins trade TE Keith Jackson and a fourth-round pick in 1995 to Green Bay for a second-round choice in 1995.
- 10. April 28, 1981:** The Dolphins trade a first-round pick and two second-round choices in 1981 to Los Angeles for LB Bob Brudzinski and a second-round selection in 1981.



Draft Preview

Dolphins hoping to make most of few selections

By ALAIN POUPART
Associate Editor

There was a price to pay to acquire a franchise running back, and the Dolphins will be paying it on the weekend of April 20-21.

While other teams stock up on collegiate talent in the NFL draft, the Dolphins will be doing a lot of watching. Barring a trade before draft day, the Dolphins will not be picking until the third round, the 90th overall selection to be precise.

This would be the first time in history the Dolphins have not picked a player in either of the first two rounds and would be by far the latest the team has ever made its first selection. The Dolphins' lowest top selection ever was the 53rd overall, used on tackle Todd Wade just two years ago.

The flip side is that the Williams trade addressed the Dolphins' biggest need, a need that would have been difficult to fill with the 25th overall selection.

With Williams aboard, the Dolphins figure to enter the draft looking for help on the offensive line, at tight end and for some depth at linebacker and cornerback.

In addition to their four picks (in the third, fourth, fifth and seventh rounds), the Dolphins were expecting to get a couple more from the league as compensation for 2001 free agent losses. Those picks probably won't come until the middle rounds.

The 2002 crop of prospects is said to be one of the best in years when it comes to the tight end position, while it's considered a weak year for linebackers. There are a good amount of quality offensive linemen and cornerbacks available.

What follows is a look at the top prospects at the Dolphins' positions of need.

OFFENSIVE LINE

After the signing of former Pro Bowl tackle Leon Searcy, who is expected to play guard,



Colorado tackle Victor Rogers is among the top offensive linemen who will be available after the first round.

the Dolphins appear to be in good shape on the right side with Wade, Searcy and 2001 starter Todd Perry.

The Dolphins are in good shape at center with Tim Ruddy, who remains the starter after the pursuit of Chicago free agent Olin Kreutz came up short.

It's on the left side where the Dolphins need help. Guard Mark Dixon is expected to return after last year's season-ending ankle injury, but there have to be some concerns about how effective he will be. And the left tackle spot is a big question mark, with Brent Smith and Marcus Spriggs both coming back from season-ending knee injuries.

In addition, the Dolphins need to improve the depth throughout the line.

Without a pick until the third round, the

WHAT: 67th annual NFL selection meeting

WHEN: April 20-21

WHERE: The Paramount Theater at Madison Square Garden, New York

TV: April 20, ESPN, noon-7 p.m.; ESPN2, 7 p.m. to conclusion; April 21, ESPN, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.; ESPN2, 1 p.m. to conclusion.

DOLPHINS PICKS: Round 1, none; Round 2, none; Round 3, 25th pick (90th overall); Round 4, 16th pick; Round 5, 26th pick; Round 6, none; Round 7, 30th pick. *Note: List does not include compensation picks to be handed out by the NFL.*

PICKS TRADED: First-round pick traded to New Orleans in deal for RB Ricky Williams; second-round pick traded to Philadelphia for 2001 picks in the third round (used to select LB Morlon Greenwood) and sixth round (DE Otis Leverette; fourth-round pick acquired from New Orleans in Williams trade; fourth-round pick sent to New Orleans in Williams trade; sixth-round pick traded to Chicago in deal for QB Cade McNown; seventh-round pick traded to Dallas in deal for WR Jeff Ogden; seventh-round pick acquired from Chicago in McNown deal.

Dolphins can forget about landing such blue-chip prospects as Bryant McKinnie, Mike Williams, Mike Pearson or Marc Colombo at tackle or Tionu Fonoti, Andre Gurode, Terrence Metcalf or Kendall Simmons at guard.

Among the tackles who could be available late in the third round are Colorado's Victor Rogers, San Diego State's Chester Pitts, Notre Dame's Kurt Vollers, Nebraska's Dave Volk, South Carolina's Melvin Paige and Miami's Joaquin Gonzalez.

Of those, only Pitts and Rogers appear to

See **PREVIEW**, next page



Guard Martin Bibla was a key component on a dominant University of Miami offensive line.

Digest Photo/JC RIDLEY

LAST YEAR'S DRAFT

Rd	Player	Pos.	College	Comment
1	Jamar Fletcher	CB	Wisconsin	Started two games but didn't distinguish himself
2	Chris Chambers	WR	Wisconsin	Became the team's most dangerous player
3a	Travis Minor	RB	Florida State	Established himself as a quality third-down back
3b	Morlon Greenwood	LB	Syracuse	Started 12 games but made few big plays
4	Traded to Dallas to move up in second round			
5	Shawn Draper	TE	Alabama	Practiced at TE and tackle but didn't play a game
6a	Brandon Winey	T	LSU	Cut in camp, spent part of season on practice squad
6b	Josh Heupel	QB	Oklahoma	Didn't show much before wrist injury led to release
6c	Otis Leverette	DE	UAB	Showed promise but was cut because of depth at DE
6d	Rick Crowell	LB	Colorado State	Waived/injured in the middle of August
7a	Pick obtained from Chicago, traded back to Bears for TE Alonzo Mayes			
7b	Pick traded to Washington for P Matt Turk			

PREVIEW, from preceding page

have the athletic ability needed to play left tackle.

Rogers is an intriguing prospect — he has plenty of ability, but he might slide in the draft because he underwent seven ankle and knee surgeries in a 16-month period a few years back.

Quality guards who could be available in the third round include Tennessee's Fred Weary, Miami's Martin Bibla, Arkansas' Shannon Money and Stanford's Eric Heitmann.

Weary bounced back from a knee injury to turn in a solid senior season for the Volunteers, while Bibla was considered to be the most technically sound player on a tremendous Miami offensive line.

TIGHT END

The Dolphins waived 2001 starter Hunter Goodwin in the offseason, but he wasn't a great fit for new offensive coordinator Norv Turner's system anyway. Jed Weaver has shown he can be a solid receiver, but he has never been a starter in the NFL. The team also is hoping that Alonzo Mayes can finally deliver on the potential he brought with him when the Bears made him a fourth-round pick in 1998.

If the Dolphins address this position in the draft, they won't have a chance to grab either Miami's Jeremy Shockey or Colorado's Daniel Graham unless they make a trade.

But among the many other good prospects at the position are Georgia's Randy McMichael, Alabama's Terry Jones, Michigan State's Chris Baker and Washington's Jerramy Stevens.

Stevens is among the most talented players at the position, but he also carries a lot of baggage, which is why he may be around when the Dolphins pick in the third round. The big tight end (6-6, 250) has a long list of off-the-field transgressions and he also broke a bone in his foot as a senior at Washington.

LINEBACKER

Defensive coordinator Jim Bates said in early March that the Dolphins were comfortable with their starting threesome of Zach Thomas, Derrick Rodgers and Morlon Greenwood.

But it's clear the Dolphins need to add depth at this position, whether it be inside or outside.

While there are very few linebackers who are expected to come in and make an immediate impact in the NFL, there are several prospects with good potential.

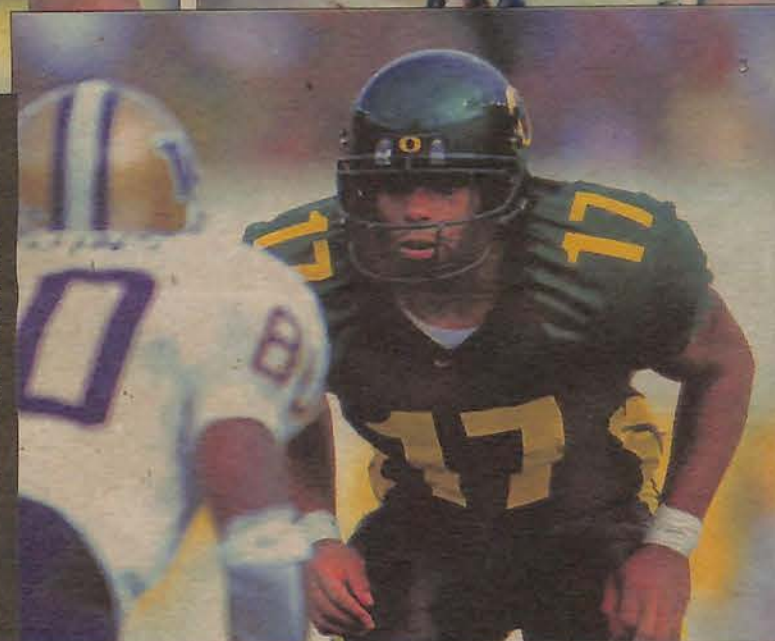
One of the more intriguing linebackers in the draft is Oklahoma's Rocky Calmus, the winner of the 2001 Butkus Award. Calmus isn't considered a great athlete, but all he did at Oklahoma was make plays and his tremendous instincts could serve him well in the NFL. He could be available when the Dolphins pick in the third round, and is definitely someone who could interest them.

The Dolphins like linebackers who can run, and among the outside linebackers who fit that mold



Among prospects who could be of interest to the Dolphins when they make their first pick in the third round are Washington tight end Jerramy Stevens (14), Oklahoma linebacker Rocky Calmus (20) and Oregon cornerback Rashad Bauman (17).

Photos/BRIAN BAHR/Allsport (Calmus); OTTO GREULLE JR./Allsport (Bauman)



are Colorado's Jashon Sykes, Georgia's Will Witherspoon and Northwestern's Kevin Bentley.

Middle linebackers who could be of interest in the third round or later would include Virginia Tech's Ben Taylor, LSU's Trev Faulk, Michigan's Larry Foote, Florida's Andra Davis and Michigan State's Josh Thornhill."

CORNERBACK

The Dolphins' first three slots at this position are set with Sam Madison, Patrick Surtain and 2001 first-round pick Jamar Fletcher, but there was nothing established beyond that after Terry Cousin joined the Carolina Panthers as an unrestricted free agent.

And besides, every team knows you can never have enough quality cornerbacks.

There are plenty of those in this year's draft, led by Texas' Quentin Jammer and Miami's Phillip Buchanon.

Good prospects with a chance to be available from the third round on include Oregon's Rashad Bauman, Tennessee's Andre Lott and Tuskegee's Roosevelt Williams.

Bauman is an excellent cover corner, but his lack of height (5-8) is likely to keep him from being a high pick. Williams, for his part, is among the top small-school prospects in this year's draft.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The last 10 players selected in the 90th overall spot, which is where the Dolphins' first pick will come this year

Year	Team	Player	School
2001	Tennessee	TE Shad Meier	Kansas State
2000	Tampa Bay	LB Nate Webster	Miami (Fla.)
1999	N.Y. Jets	T David Loverne	San Jose State
1998	Green Bay	DE Jonathan Brown	Tennessee
1997	Green Bay	K Brett Conway	Penn State
1996	Green Bay	C Mike Flanagan	UCLA
1995	Green Bay	WR Antonio Freeman	Virginia Tech
1994	New England	C Joe Burch	Texas Southern
1993	Cincinnati	DB Marcello Simmons	SMU
1992	New England	DB Dion Lambert	UCLA



Sigrid



Age: 27
 Height: 5-7
 Occupation: Property management
 Nationality: Puerto Rican
 Marital status: Single
 Years as Dolphins Cheerleader: Rookie
 Favorite food: Italian, Puerto Rican
 Favorite holiday: My birthday



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AFC EAST NOTES



Jets rebuilding on defense

After finishing 19th in the league in yards allowed last season, the Jets defense has undergone a major facelift.

By the time the 2002 season starts, New York could have as many as seven new starters on defense. The list includes the two cornerback spots, which became vacant after starters **Aaron Glenn** and **Marcus Coleman** were selected in the expansion draft.

Among the new starters will be free agent acquisitions **Sam Cowart** (LB), **Sam Gaines** (SS) and **Aaron Beasley** (CB). Former Tampa Bay backup **Steve White** was signed as a free agent, and he was promised an opportunity to challenge incumbent **Shaun Ellis** for the starting job at left defensive end.

"They all bring leadership to this defense that maybe was lacking last year," said Jets general manager **Terry Bradway**. "We were trying to identify guys who could come in and do something similar to what **Aeneas Williams** did with the Rams last year. With Aaron, Sam and Steve White, we have a chance to do that at every level. I feel really good about that."

The Jets were prepared to lose starting right tackle **Ryan Young** in the expansion draft, because they feel they have a replacement in place in 2001 third-round pick **Kareem McKenzie**.

But they were not counting on having to replace starting guard **Kerry Jenkins**, who signed as an unrestricted free agent with Tampa Bay.

The Jets now will be without two-fifths of an offensive line that ranked among the best in the league last year and paved the way for **Curtis Martin** to finish second in the league in rushing.

One of the appeals of the Jets for Cowart was the opportunity to be reunited with defensive coordinator **Ted Cottrell**, who took Cowart out to dinner the night before he signed.

Cottrell was downright giddy about the signing, and with good reason. On the same day, the Jets re-signed talented linebacker **Marvin Jones**, completing a starting trio with former Pro Bowl selection **Mo Lewis**.

"With the addition of Sam C., our linebacking corps is one of the best in the league right now," Cottrell said. "I can't wait to get on the field."

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

The Super Bowl champion Patriots took care of one of their biggest off-season priorities very early when they were able to re-sign RB **Antowain Smith** a few hours after he had become an unrestricted free agent.

Smith was one of the most important contributors for the improbable

champs, as he bounced back after two disappointing years in Buffalo to lead the Patriots with a career-high 1,157 yards and 12 rushing touchdowns.

The 30-year-old Smith was rewarded with a five-year contract worth around \$20 million, a massive raise over the \$525,000 he earned last season.

Smith might have been able to get more money had he shopped around, with one of the suitors possibly being his hometown Houston Texans.

But Smith wanted to pay the Patriots back for giving him another shot after he was dumped by the Bills.

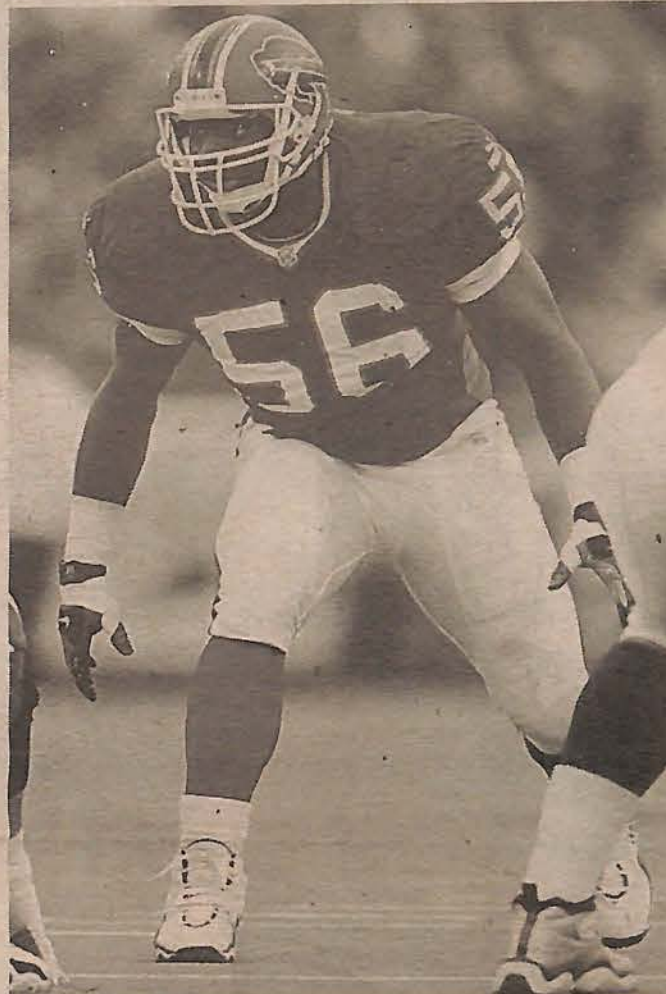
"The grass isn't always greener, that's the way I look at it," Smith told the *Boston Herald*. "From the beginning I wanted to stay. If the (contract) was as good as anything I would have gotten anywhere else, then I wanted to be back. So I'm happy with it. No second guesses."

While the Patriots were able to trade one disgruntled veteran, they are having a hard time unloading another.

Drew Bledsoe comes with significantly less baggage than **Terry Glenn**, but he's also harder to trade because the asking price is so much higher. New England apparently lost two potential suitors for Bledsoe when Seattle re-signed **Trent Dilfer** and Chicago re-signed **Jim Miller**.

With **Tom Brady** clearly entrenched as the starting quarterback, it's obvious Bledsoe would like to move on. But Bledsoe, who skipped the parade honoring the Patriots' Super Bowl victory, may not have a choice in the matter because New England isn't likely to just release him.

As for Glenn, the Patriots were able to get a couple of draft picks for the talented but troubled wide receiver. That has to be considered a coup because it's obvious Glenn had no future in New England after he spent last season bickering with the team.



Former Buffalo Pro Bowl linebacker Sam Cowart was the Jets' biggest acquisition in free agency.

Improving the passing game was a priority in the offseason, and the Patriots took steps to address that concern by signing wide receiver **Donald Hayes** and tight end **Christian Fauria**.

Hayes led the Carolina Panthers with 52 catches last season, and he figures to challenge for the starting job opposite **Troy Brown**. As for Fauria, he caught 21 passes for Seattle — the Patriots' top two tight ends, **Jermaine Wiggins** and **Rod Rutledge**, combined for 19 receptions.

BUFFALO BILLS

The Buffalo Bills suffered a major loss when Cowart, a former Pro Bowl selection in 2000, left via free agency, but they managed to soften the blow by picking up **London Fletcher** a few hours later.

The 26-year-old Fletcher was the leader of the Rams defense the last three years, earning the nickname "dot.com" in the process — because, as he likes to say, he's always on the line to make the tackle.

At 5-9 and 241 pounds, Fletcher is much smaller than the 6-2, 245-pound Cowart. And he's also not quite the athlete Cowart is.

But on the flip side, Cowart is coming off an Achilles tendon injury and there has to be some degree of concern that he can regain the form that saw him earn a Pro Bowl invitation for his play in the 2000 season.

Besides, it's not as though Fletcher hasn't been a productive player. He has not missed a game in four years. He set the Rams' franchise record with 193 tackles in 2000 and recorded 189 last season while helping St. Louis reach the Super Bowl.

"We liked Sam a lot, no doubt about it, and we did everything we could to keep him," said Bills general manager **Tom Donahoe**. "But we're very excited to have London Fletcher coming here. He's going to bring us a lot of excitement and leadership."

The **Rob Johnson** era has ended in Buffalo — not a second too soon in the eyes of many — but the quarterback didn't go quietly.

While visiting the expansion Houston Texans after his release from the Bills, Johnson said he wouldn't take as many sacks with the Texans because the offensive line is better than Buffalo's. Earlier, Johnson said one of the keys to good quarterbacking was finding a good defense — obviously forgetting the fact that Buffalo was ranked first in the league in 1999 and third in 2000.

And Johnson also had this to say: "Happiness is a lot more important than money. Things weren't going right in Buffalo, and there needed to be a change."

The Bills cut Johnson after he refused to restructure his contract. They were said to be zeroing in on former Saints starter **Jeff Blake** to replace Johnson and battle **Alex Van Pelt** for the starting job. Johnson, for his part, eventually signed with Tampa Bay.

New Bills offensive coordinator **Kevin Gilbride** has enjoyed a lot of success in his NFL career, but he'll be trying to snap out of a slump of sorts in Buffalo.

Gilbride has spent eight years as an offensive coordinator in the NFL, and his units have ranked in the NFL's top three five times, including the Houston Oilers' No. 1 ranking in 1990.

But Gilbride bombed in his last two jobs, as head coach of the Chargers in 1997-98 and as offensive coordinator of the Steelers in 1999-2000 when quarterback **Kordell Stewart** struggled badly under his tutelage.

Editor's note: The Colts no longer are included in the notes because of their move to the AFC South under the NFL's division realignment.



Offseason Roster

(Listed alphabetically by position; *-indicates unrestricted free agent; as of March 18)

QUARTERBACKS

NO.	NAME	HT.	WT.	EXP.	COLLEGE
9	Jay Fiedler	6-2	225	7	Dartmouth
6	Ray Lucas	6-3	225	5	Rutgers
8	Cade McNown	6-1	210	4	UCLA

RUNNING BACKS

35	Marlon Barnes	5-10	211	2	Colorado
47	Robert Edwards	5-11	220	4	Georgia
28	Travis Minor	5-10	201	2	Florida State
26	Lamar Smith*	5-11	224	9	Houston
25	Jerry Westbrook	6-2	230	1	Ohio State
34	Ricky Williams	5-10	230	4	Texas

FULLBACKS

33	Deon Dyer	5-11	255	3	North Carolina
36	Matt Kalapinski	6-1	227	1	Maryland
44	Rob Konrad	6-3	255	4	Syracuse

WIDE RECEIVERS

17	Robert Baker	5-11	198	2	Auburn
84	Chris Chambers	5-11	210	2	Wisconsin
15	Ronney Daniels	6-1	210	R	Auburn
86	Oronde Gadsden	6-2	215	5	Winston-Salem
19	Joey Getherall	5-7	170	1	Notre Dame
18	Margin Hooks	5-11	190	1	BYU
16	Albert Johnson	5-9	190	2	SMU
11	Darnell McDonald	6-3	199	2	Kansas State
80	James McKnight	6-1	198	9	Liberty
88	Jeff Ogden*	6-0	187	5	Eastern Washington
14	Sulecio Sanford	5-10	190	2	Middle Tennessee
87	Dedric Ward	5-9	190	6	Northern Iowa

TIGHT ENDS

46	Shawn Draper	6-3	280	2	Alabama
85	Alonzo Mayes	6-4	260	5	Oklahoma State
89	Ed Perry	6-4	270	6	James Madison
82	Jed Weaver	6-4	262	4	Oregon

OFFENSIVE TACKLES

60	Spencer Folau*	6-5	315	6	Idaho
79	Cornell Green	6-6	320	3	UCF
67	Jerry Jackson	6-5	320	R	Fort Valley State
74	Brent Smith	6-5	315	6	Mississippi State
76	Marcus Spriggs	6-3	315	6	Houston
71	Todd Wade	6-8	325	3	Mississippi

OFFENSIVE GUARDS

62	Jim Bundren	6-3	303	3	Clemson
70	Anthony Cesario	6-5	305	3	Colorado State
63	Mark Dixon	6-4	300	5	Virginia
66	Jamie Nails	6-6	360	5	Florida A&M
75	Todd Perry	6-5	305	10	Kentucky
72	Leon Searcy	6-4	320	11	Miami (Fla.)
68	Andy Vincent	6-4	305	1	Texas A&M
69	James Wagstaff	6-4	330	1	North Carolina

CENTERS

NO.	NAME	HT.	WT.	EXP.	COLLEGE
65	Troy Andrew	6-4	305	2	Duke
61	Tim Ruddy	6-3	300	9	Notre Dame

DEFENSIVE TACKLES

95	Tim Bowens	6-4	320	9	Mississippi
64	Larry Chester	6-2	310	5	Temple
92	Daryl Gardener	6-6	310	7	Baylor
97	Ernest Grant	6-5	315	3	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
94	Jermaine Haley	6-4	305	3	Butte College
78	Otis Pitts	6-0	307	1	Louisiana Tech
93	Dario Romero	6-3	305	1	Eastern Washington
98	Henry Taylor	6-2	295	4	South Carolina

DEFENSIVE ENDS

96	David Bowens	6-3	260	4	Western Illinois
91	Lorenzo Bromell*	6-6	268	5	Clemson
77	Rod Kelly	6-5	260	1	NE Oklahoma
90	Adewale Ogunleye	6-4	270	3	Indiana
99	Jason Taylor	6-6	260	6	Akron
73	Al Wallace	6-5	260	4	Maryland

LINEBACKERS

52	Morlon Greenwood	6-0	242	2	Syracuse
51	Tommy Hendricks	6-2	233	3	Michigan
57	Corey Moore	5-11	225	2	Virginia Tech
59	Derrick Rodgers	6-1	235	6	Arizona State
50	Kevin Rollins	6-1	240	1	Toledo
56	Twan Russell	6-1	230	6	Miami (Fla.)
54	Zach Thomas	5-11	235	7	Texas Tech

CORNERBACKS

24	Jamar Fletcher	5-9	184	2	Wisconsin
37	Zebbie Lethridge	6-0	190	1	Texas Tech
29	Sam Madison	5-11	185	6	Louisville
23	Patrick Surtain	5-11	192	5	Southern Miss

SAFETIES

43	Delvin Brown	6-0	205	1	Miami (Fla.)
27	Arturo Freeman	6-0	196	3	South Carolina
42	Trent Gamble	5-9	195	3	Wyoming
40	Ray Green	6-3	187	3	South Carolina
31	Brock Marion	5-11	205	10	Nevada
41	Scott McGarrahan*	6-1	200	5	New Mexico
20	Scott Shields	6-4	229	3	Weber State
38	Joshua Symonette	5-10	180	2	Tennessee Tech
22	Shawn Wooden	5-11	205	7	Notre Dame

KICKER

10	Olindo Mare	5-10	195	6	Syracuse
2	Vitaly Pisetsky	5-10	219	1	Wisconsin

PUNTER

1	Matt Turk*	6-5	235	8	Wis.-Whitewater
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OFFSEASON CHRONOLOGY

As long as there is a salary cap, there never will be a shortage of news during the offseason, but the Dolphins took it to another level this year.

Highlighted by the trade for Ricky Williams, the Dolphins have been one of the busiest teams in the NFL since the New England Patriots ended the 2001 season with their stunning victory over St. Louis in Super Bowl XXXVI.

What follows is a day-by-day account of the Dolphins' busy offseason.

Jan. 28: The Dolphins begin negotiations on a new contract for quarterback Jay Fiedler, who has stated he plans on voiding the last year of his current deal by a Feb. 23 deadline. Team president Eddie Jones announces he will retire after the 2002 season. The team promotes four front office employees, including Rick Spielman (becomes Senior Vice President, Football Operations/Player Personnel) and Bryan Wiedmeier (becomes Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer). In San Diego, Norv Turner exercises a clause in his contract allowing him to leave the Chargers.

Jan. 29: Coach Dave Wannstedt meets with owner Wayne Huizenga to discuss, among other things, his future.

Jan. 30: Turner interviews with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for their head-coaching vacancy.

Jan. 31: The Dolphins refuse Buffalo permission to interview quarterbacks coach Mike Shula for their vacant offensive coordinator position.

Feb. 2: Bob Kuechenberg falls short in his quest to enter the Hall of Fame as he isn't among the five people elected to the Class of 2002.

Feb. 3: Linebacker Zach Thomas informs the NFL he will skip the Pro Bowl because of a shoulder injury.

Feb. 4: Turner pulls himself out of the running for the Tampa Bay head-coaching job.

Feb. 5: Turner is reunited with Wannstedt as he joins the Dolphins as assistant head coach/offensive coordinator.

Feb. 6: The Dolphins allocate seven players — WR Ronney Daniels, WR Margin Hooks, T Jerry Jackson, DT Otis Pitts, LB Kevin Rollins, S Scott Shields and RB Jerry Westbrook — to the NFL Europe League for the 2002 season. Wide receiver Oronde Gadsden undergoes arthroscopic surgery on his right shoulder. Former Dolphins offensive coordinator Kippy Brown is hired as an assistant coach by the expansion Houston Texans.

Feb. 7: Quarterback Josh Heupel, a sixth-round pick of the Dolphins in 2001, signs with Green Bay.

Feb. 13: Fiedler signs a new five-year contract through the 2006



FEB. 21 • HUNTER GOODWIN

season, while Wannstedt gets a one-year contract extension through the 2004 season. Former practice squad member RB Vaughn Sanders signs with the San Diego Chargers.

Feb. 14: Wide receiver O.J. McDuffie meets with Wannstedt and informs him he's not ready to retire yet.

Feb. 15: The Dolphins announce an increase in ticket prices. Bill Arnsparger, the architect of the defense during the Dolphins' Super Bowl days of the early 1970s, is hired by San Diego as associate head coach for defense.

Feb. 18: None of the five Dolphins players made available — DT



FEB. 28 • TIM BOWENS

Tim Bowens, LB Scott Galyon, TE Hunter Goodwin, G Heath Irwin and RB J.J. Johnson — are selected by the Houston Texans in the expansion draft.

Feb. 19: Dolphins officials discuss with New Orleans front office personnel the possibility of a trade involving Saints running back Ricky Williams.

Feb. 20: Dolphins senior vice president of football operations and player personnel Rick Spielman emphatically declares that cornerback Patrick Surtain will not be part of any deal involving Williams.

Feb. 21: Goodwin, Galyon and Irwin are released along with wide receiver Damón Savage. Safety and special teams standout Shawn Wooden is signed to a one-year contract extension.

Feb. 25: Growing frustrated with trade talks with the Dolphins, New Orleans general manager Randy Mueller says Williams might be pulled off the market soon. The Dolphins gain some salary-cap room by restructuring the contracts of defensive end Jason Taylor and cornerback Patrick Surtain.

Feb. 26: CBS announces that Dan Marino will join its "NFL Today" pregame show beginning next fall.

Feb. 27: Newspaper reports indicate the Dolphins have agreed to a restructured contract with McDuffie. Defensive tackle Damian Gregory is waived, while wide receiver Darnell McDonald and defensive tackle Dario Romero are signed to 2002 contracts. The agent for J.J. Johnson says he has asked the team to either trade or release his client.

Feb. 28: Tim Bowens is signed to a new three-year contract with two option years, only hours after the team released him. The Dolphins also release safety Brock Marion and McDuffie. Restricted free agent Jed Weaver is tendered by the Dolphins, as are exclusive-rights free agents Trent Gamble and Adewale Ogunleye. Wide receiver Dedric Ward undergoes surgery on his left foot. Gregory is claimed off waivers by the Cleveland Browns.

March 1: The free agency signing period begins, and the Dolphins promptly talk to Carolina defensive tackle Larry Chester. The agent for former Jets safety Victor Green contacts Dolphins officials, while the New York Jets show some interest in free agent punter Matt Turk.

March 3: Defensive coordinator Jim Bates says the Dolphins are contemplating using defensive tackle Daryl Gardener at end, and Gardener says he would have no objections.

See **CHRONOLOGY**, page 26

CHRONOLOGY, from page 25

March 4: The Dolphins make another offer to the Saints for Williams — picks in the first and fourth rounds this year and a conditional third-rounder in 2003 for the running back and a third-round selection this year. The Browns join the Williams sweepstakes, and they are said to be offering their first-round pick. Dolphins unrestricted free agents Kenny Mixon and Lorenzo Bromell both visit the Minnesota Vikings, while safeties Brock Marion and Brian Walker are in Detroit talking with the Lions.

March 5: Chester becomes the Dolphins' first free agent signing as he agrees to a four-year deal. Guard Jamie Nails is signed to a two-year deal. Bears Pro Bowl center Olin Kreutz visits the Dolphins amid reports he is close to joining the team as an unrestricted free agent. Former Vikings wide receiver Cris Carter and former New England running back Robert Edwards also make visits. Walker becomes the first unrestricted free agent to leave as he signs a five-year deal with Detroit.

March 6: Edwards signs a one-year contract with the Dolphins, while Kreutz concludes his visit.

March 7: Former Pittsburgh and Jacksonville offensive lineman Leon Searcy visits the Dolphins.

March 8: The long-anticipated trade for Ricky Williams is finally consummated, while Searcy agrees to terms on a one-year contract. Chicago Bears safety Tony Parrish visits the Dolphins.

March 9: The Dolphins re-sign Marion to a five-year contract. Mixon leaves as a free agent, as he signs a deal with the Minnesota Vikings.

March 11: On the day Williams is introduced to the South Florida media at a press conference at Dolphins headquarters, the team announces the signing of Searcy along with that of wide receiver Sulecio Sanford. Also, wideout Dedric Ward signs a contract extension.

March 12: Running back J.J. Johnson is traded to the Cleveland Browns for a conditional 2004 draft pick.

March 13: Guard Mark Dixon (ankle) and Marion (knee) both undergo surgical procedures. Cris Carter calls the Dolphins.

March 14: Colts wide receiver Terrence Wilkins, a restricted free agent, visits the Dolphins. While re-

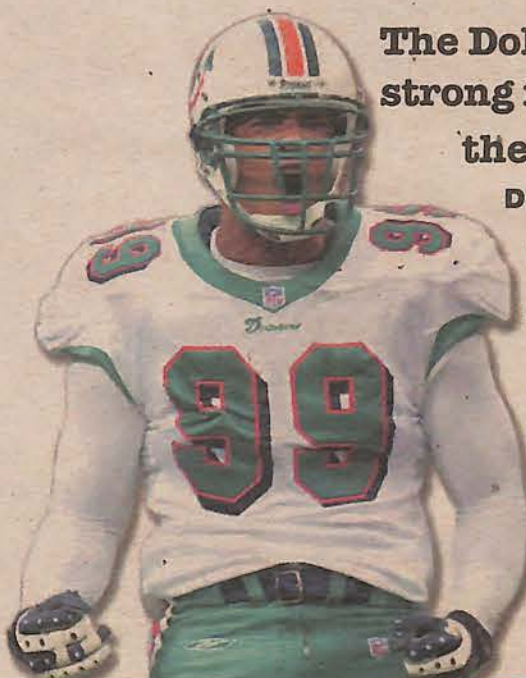
ports suggest that Howard David will replace Bill Zimpfer as the Dolphins' radio play-by-play voice, the team announces a two-year extension of its agreement with WQAM Radio to broadcast its games.

March 15: The Carolina Panthers contact the agent for running back Lamar Smith, who is an unrestricted free agent.

March 17: Cornerback Terry

Cousin agrees to terms with Carolina, becoming the third unrestricted free agent to leave the Dolphins this off-season. Ricky Williams is among the Dolphins players on hand to lend a helping hand at Jay Fiedler's Champion Lyte Prime Time Football Skills Camp in Boca Raton.

... And there's still more than five months left until the start of the regular season.



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MARCH 11 • DEDRIC WARD



OVERVIEW

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Dear Overview:

I thought this was going to be an offseason like so many others. Big talk, very little action. Boy, was I wrong. The Dolphins have shown that they intend to be a big player in the battle for the Super Bowl. The trade for Ricky Williams proves this. He is the running back I have been waiting to see in a Dolphins uniform for so long.

The Dolphins are a better team right now than they were in January. Now it is up to each player to raise his game. One player will not win a Super Bowl. But one player like Ricky Williams is a great way to start.

Vivian Mahoney
Jacksonville, Fla.

Dear Overview:

I've seen Ricky Williams gain yards with no hole in front of him. I hope he won't be forced to do that because of problems on the Dolphins' offensive line. Please, Coach Wannstedt, find us some more linemen. You know there are going to be more injuries this year. Depth is the key.

Wayne Simpkins
Miami, Fla.

Dear Overview:

I love these offseason moves, but James McKnight scares me. The Dolphins need to find another reliable receiver. The image of McKnight dropping that sure touchdown against the Ravens has stayed with me all offseason. He just doesn't make enough big plays.

Godfrey Williams
Tampa, Fla.

Dear Overview:

Ricky Williams is the best thing to happen to the Dolphins defense in years. He's going to keep the defense on the sideline. Zach Thomas should take him out to dinner.

Larry Sims
Orlando, Fla.

Dear Overview:

I cannot believe we finally have a running game! I think I hear angels singing! I was very, very tough on Wannstedt and Spielman at season's end. I wanted 'em both fired! I will gladly eat my crow with some hollandaise sauce please!

The Dolphins brain trust has had an excel-

lent offseason, so far. I have a very funny feeling they are not done. Keep up the great work, guys. Now just bring back ole Danny boy for one season as the backup and get him his ring!

Greg Gully
Nutter, N.J.

Dear Overview:

I guess we can now sing ... Hey Ricky, you're so fine, you get first downs all the time. Hey Ricky ...

N. Rivero
Sunrise, Fla.

Dear Overview:

This letter is in response to Scott Baur's letter in the Dec. 29 edition of *Dolphin Digest*. Let me tell you what I am "sick" of. These "so-called" local fans who can't sell out two straight home playoff games, that boo a team that busts its butt despite injuries too numerous to count.

Before you start tossing shots at those of us "out-of-state" Dolfans, get your own ducks in a row. I would like to see you try to get information on Dolphins games from outside of South Florida. Come talk to me when you wear your Dolphins gear in someone else's stadium. Or when you listen to games on the Internet. Wait for score updates when you are half a world away in a foreign country serving your country. So next time you want to talk tough, be sure you can find those extra 10,000 or so friends of yours who just could not make the last two Dolphins playoff games.

Shawn Cole
Southport, N.Y.

Dear Overview:

Being a die-hard Dolphins fan, it was very hard watching the Pats win the Super Bowl, but through it all a clear message came to light. In my opinion, the Dolphins are a team with much more talent than the Patriots, but what the Patriots displayed throughout their charge for the playoffs was grit, heart, desire, determination and dedication through true teamwork. I believe that other NFL teams — and more specifically the players — should take a page from the Patriots' book. A team with players picked up from the NFL scrap heap are now champions ... go figure.

Lawrence Bland Jr.
Norfolk, Mass.

Dear Overview:

OK, fans, let's get rockin', let's get pumped, even though in the playoffs we got thumped. That's no reason to get us down, we will cheer for our Fins without a frown. We have all the tools to get it done, so sit back, enjoy and have some fun. With Wannstedt and Turner back together once more, I can see the Lombardi Trophy dancing on the Miami shore.

Frankie Bernardo
Trumbull, Conn.

Dear Overview:

What I'll be hoping for from free agency and the draft will be the same common denominator for championship success whether it's in the NFL or Pop Warner — the offensive line. You can add all the "skill" position players and rookie phenom wide receivers you want, but without a line, forget it. The right free agent for your line can take you to a new level. Case in point, the Rams pick up free agent Adam Timmerman from Green Bay, and suddenly the line is solidified and the skill players excel. The same could be said of Philadelphia grabbing tackle Jon Runyan from Tennessee's Super Bowl team.

I'm worried that Coach Wannstedt might be content to find a starter out of career backups Brent Smith and Marcus Spriggs. Is this team satisfied with the play of Todd Perry and even Tim Ruddy? If so, I can't understand why. In my opinion, only Todd Wade and Mark Dixon deserve to be brought back unopposed. Who is the next Chicago Bear castoff to join our team?

Frank Harkins
Fort Meade, Md.

Dear Overview:

The problem with the Dolphins is not Jay Fiedler. The problem with this team is the lack of continuity and talent on the O-line. This organization needs to wake up and realize that football games are won and lost in the trenches. The Dolphins will continue to get hammered in the playoffs (164-20), unless they address the deficiencies on the line. One offensive touchdown in their last five playoff losses is not going to get it done! The best years of Thomas, Taylor and Madison are being wasted. It's not a coincidence the Dolphins won their only two Super Bowls with O-linemen like Langer, Little and Kuechenberg.

Bitter Brent
Elk Grove, Calif.

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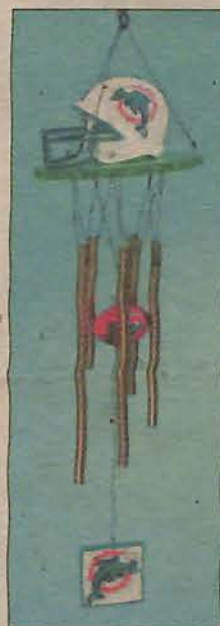
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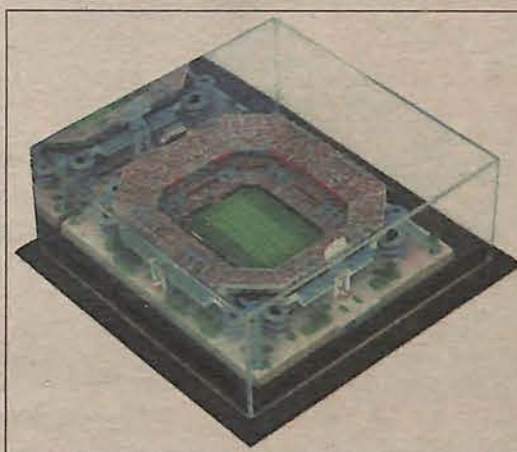
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